

# Associates of Sri Caitanya

His Divine Grace Śrīla Bhakti Ballabha Tīrtha Goswāmī Mahārāja

## Foreword

by Sri Bhakti Promode Puri Maharaj

Our divine guru, Om Vishnupada 108 Sri Srimad Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Ṭhakur, who has now entered into the eternal pastimes of the Supreme Lord, was the founder of the exemplary monastery, the Chaitanya Math in Mayapur in Nabadwip, and its branch Gaudiya Maths that have now spread throughout the world. His dear associate and successor in the disciplic succession, Srimad Bhakti Dayita Madhava Maharaj, the best of the monks of the Tridandī order, founded the Chaitanya Gaudiya Maths which have now also spread throughout India. Madhava Maharaj has gone to join the pastimes of the Lord, but has left his dear disciple and monk in the Tridandi order, Srimad Bhakti Ballabha Tirtha Maharaj, as the current president and acharya of the Chaitanya Gaudiya Math.

The venerable Tirtha Maharaj has edited this current jewel-like volume, the first of two that recount the nectarean activities of the associates of Lord Gauranga and the acharyas of the Gaudiya Vaishnava religion. Tirtha Maharaj has previously written commentaries on the life of the devotee Dhruva, a guide to the Vrindavan parikrama, a summary of the procedures involved in deity worship as well as a biography in two volumes of his guru, Bhakti Dayita Madhava Maharaj. These have all been published in Bengali. He is also the editor of the Chaitanya Gaudiya Math's monthly magazine, Sri Chaitanya Vaṇi, in which his biography of Madhava Maharaj, as well as the biographies found in

this volume, first appeared in installments.

Tirtha Maharaj has shown a force of intelligence beyond the capacities of an ordinary man, for at seventy years of age he not only edits a monthly magazine and writes books such as this one, but takes the responsibility for managing a large organization like the Chaitanya Gaudiya Maths through which he preaches Chaitanya's message throughout India, from the Himalayas to Cape Cormorin, to devotees speaking a variety of languages. It has been possible for him, even at his advanced age, to find the energy and the enthusiasm to apply himself to tasks which tax his body, mind, speech and intelligence, and yet to achieve unimaginable results. This is proof that the inexhaustible affectionate blessings of the Supreme Lord, the guru and the Vaishnavas have poured down upon him and that unlimited divine powers have descended upon him through their transcendental mercy. We pray to the lotus feet of the Supreme Lord, the guru and the Vaishnavas that he will live many more years so that he may continue to serve Krishna and his devotees in the same enthusiastic and unyielding manner. We also pray with all our heart that the sweet biographies of Madhava Maharaj and the associates of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu act like a potion of nectar to bring continual joy to the devotees.

Lord Gaurasundara Mahaprabhu is the most generous incarnation, who bestowed upon the world the unique love of Vraja, a mood of devotion to himself which had never before been given. The lives of the saintly, rich with the sweetness of loving service, are worth repeated study because they are most dear to Gaurasundara. Without such study, we will never be able to understand the nature of devotional service. By relishing the lives of the great devotees we become attracted by their compassion and develop an affection without artifice for their lotus feet. Since the Lord is so kind to his devotees, this is the road to becoming the object of his affection.

Scripture has said that the Lord's mercy follows that of His devotees. Lord Krishna himself has said in the Bhagavatam that the worship of His devotee is dearer to Him than His own worship (mad-bhakta-pujabhyadhika). Vrindavan Das paraphrases this statement in the Chaitanya Bhagavat: "The worship of My devotee is even greater than Me; this has been confirmed by the Lord in the Veda and the Bhagavatam."

No matter how great a show of commitment one makes to Krishna's worship, Krishna will never pay the slightest attention to it if one disregards the service of

His devotees. Indeed, Krishna will refuse such worship because of the performer's pride. In no way can one be engaged in the worship of the Lord without following in the footsteps of the devotees. Thus the scriptures have ordained that one should begin one's puja with the worship of the guru, who is the best of the devotees and most dear to Krishna. Krishna stated as much to his foremost devotee and associate Uddhava, when he said, "O Uddhava! Know that it is I who am the acharya. Never show disrespect for the acharya by thinking that he is an ordinary man. The guru is the sum of all the gods." The compassion of the Lord has become incarnate in the form of the guru. Worship to the Lord can have no meaning if one disregards the guru.

The author of this book has gathered a great deal of information from numerous sources about the lives of the devotees, and has made this information more relishable by virtue of his own insight. It is my wish that these biographies of Mahaprabhu's devotees will be read on their appearance and disappearance days, bringing great joy to both hearer and speaker. It is for this reason that we pray for the wide distribution of this work. If translated into Hindi and English, it will be possible for it to be enjoyed around the world.

In the beginning of this book, the author has relished the lives of Jagannath Mishra, Madhavendra Puri, Isvara Puri, Advaita Acharya, Srivasa Pandit, Chandrasekhara Acharya, Pundarika Vidyanidhi, Gadadhara Pandit, Vakresvara Pandit, Gadadhara Das, Shivananda Sena, Paramananda Puri, Murari Gupta, etc. Every letter of these accounts is drenched with the juice of devotion. Without repeatedly relishing these life stories we will never be able to enter the transcendental kingdom nor to advance in the devotional life. The lives of the devotees are filled with loving service to the Lord and should be repeatedly discussed for this will melt our stonelike hearts. It will awaken in us a genuine remorse for all the wasted activities in which we have engaged outside of the devotional life, thus readying our minds for the reception of the pure devotee. The devotees of the Lord are oceans of mercy; they feel distress at the pain of others; they are endowed with amazing powers of forgiveness; their hearts are entirely pure, free from enviousness, hate and jealousy. When they see the misery of persons like myself, the lowest of souls who, bound by illusion and forgetful of their eternal identities, have become disinterested in Krishna, they pray to Krishna's lotus feet for their salvation, shedding tears in intense feelings of compassion. After hearing this prayer, Krishna turns his merciful glance towards us.

*vaiṣṇavera avedane kṛṣṇa dayamay |*

*mo hena pamara prati habena saday ||*

The merciful Krishna, upon hearing the supplications of the Vaishnavas, will become merciful to those, who like me, are most fallen. (Bhaktivinoda Thakur)

The Lord, the ocean of compassion, cannot resist the heart-rending tears of those whose lives are totally dedicated to Him. The Lord quickly appears in the world at the intense pleas of the surrendered devotee. By the mercy of the devotees, the living beings attain the great fortune of the Lord's mercy. Therefore one should take shelter of a pure devotee before anything else.

*suddha-bhakata-caraṇa-reṇu bhajana-anukula |*

*bhakata-seva parama-siddhi prema-latikara mula ||*

“The dust of the pure devotee's lotus feet has the most positive effect on one's worship of the Lord. Service to the devotee is the greatest perfection, it is the root of the creeper of love for Krishna.” (Bhaktivinoda Thakur).

At the beginning of his collection of devotional songs, Saraṇagati, Bhaktivinoda Thakur wrote: “Lord Krishna Chaitanya, out of compassion for the people of this world, descended into this world along with his eternal associates and his abode. In order to give prema most rare, he taught the process of surrender which is the life of devotion.”

In every age for all eternity, the Lord takes a body in each of the unlimited universes. This does not cause a disruption in the Lord's eternal pastimes. Thus, when the Supreme Lord, the lila-puruṣottama, son of Nanda, the king of Vraja, appears in Nabadwip as the son of Jagannath Mishra, all of his associates from his activities in Vraja become his companions in his pastimes as Gaura. Narottama Das Thakur sings: “He who was the son of the King of Vraja has become the son of Sachi, Balaram has become Nitai.”

Krishnadas Kaviraj states as much in the Chaitanya-charitamṛta: “After twenty-seven cycles of four yugas of the seventh Manvantara named Vaivasvata, at the end of the Dvapara Yuga of the twenty-eighth cycle, Krishna appeared with all of Vraja.” (1.3.9-10)

Jiva Goswami explains the Bhagavata verses which begins *kṛṣṇa-varṇam tviṣakṛṣṇam* (11.5.32) and *asan varṇas trayo hy asya* (10.8.13) in his commentary, *Krama-sandarbha*: “Thus the same Krishna who descended at the end of the Dvapara Yuga, appears as Gaura in the age of Kali which immediately follows it. From this understanding it is evident that Gauranga is a special incarnation of Krishna. This is the only way to avoid contradictions in the Bhagavatam verses.” [These verses stated that “Krishna appears in a color other than black” and the Krishna appears in the four ages in four colors, red, black, white and gold.] (*tad evaṁ yad dvapare kṛṣṇo’vatarati tad eva kalau srigauro’py avataratiti svarasyalabdheḥ srikṛṣṇavirbhava-viśeṣa evayaṁ gaura ity ayati, tadavyabhicarat.*)

The Supreme Personality of Godhead Krishna displays activities that are characterized by magnanimity (*audarya*) which is predominantly *madhurya*, whereas the pastimes of the Lord in Nabadwip, which is non-different from those of Vraja, are characterized by *madhurya* which is predominantly magnanimous. Just as all of Krishna’s qualities are manifest in His devotees, so too Gaura’s qualities in their entirety are manifest in his devotees. Since Gaura is the most magnanimous, the most generous incarnation, these qualities are the primary characteristics of his lila and are therefore also present in all the participants of his lila. It is thus natural that constant rereading of the activities of the devotees who have dedicated themselves to Gaura’s service, will wash all of the dirt and sin from our hearts and we will become free from envy, hatred and jealousy. Then, in the same way that it is said of Gaura that “following the practices and principles himself, he taught the world” (*Chaitanya Charitamrita* 1.3.20, 1.4.41), we will be able to enthusiastically preach the message of Lord Chaitanya to every corner of the world. Should this happen, by the mercy of the beneficent Lord, a supreme peace will be established everywhere, the victory banner of the holy name will fly, the skies of the world will ring with the glorious sound of Krishna’s name being sung, the sweetness of the Holy Name which Lord Chaitanya himself chanted will flood the world with love. As Bhaktivinoda Thakur has sung, “What power there is in the name of Krishna!”

The monk Bhakti Varidhi Parivrajaka Maharaj, who is particularly dear to me, took responsibility for the printing of this book of biographies; he worked with dedication both day and night to finish the job, and even if I could sing his glories with a hundred tongues I would not feel satisfied. He not only produced this volume, but works tirelessly and with unflagging enthusiasm to put out all of the Math publications. Seeing this, his gurus will pour unlimited affectionate

blessings on him. We pray to the Lord's lotus feet with all our heart that his eager efforts to serve the Lord, the guru, and all the Vaishnavas constantly increase, that he receive their unlimited blessings and enjoy good health and long life.

Srila Prabhupada Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur used to call the printing press the big drum, the *brihat mridanga*, because through books and magazines filled with the authoritative message of pure devotion, the worldwide preaching mission can have a stable and far-reaching effect. Therefore the beating of the "big drum" is a major element in serving Mahaprabhu in preaching his teachings. Mahaprabhu himself said, "Wherever you go, give the fruits of love to whomever you see." (Chaitanya Charitamrita 1.9.36), "Those who have taken a human birth in India (Bharatabhumi) should perfect their own lives and then do good for others." (Chaitanya Charitamrita 1.9.41) "Spread this command of mine wherever you go: "Chant Krishna, worship Krishna, learn Krishna's teachings.'" (Chaitanya Bhagavat 2.13.7-8) "Explain Krishna consciousness to whomever you meet." (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.7.128) "In all the towns and villages of the world, my name shall be heard." (Chaitanya Bhagavat 3.4.126). As we try to fulfill these commands of the Lord in as sustained and far-reaching way as possible, we will get most help from the "big mridanga."

Therefore, in making the preaching of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's message through printing books a prominent part of the Math's service activities, Parivrajaka Maharaj and Bhakti Ballabha Tirtha Maharaj are insuring that they will receive the affection of their gurus and all pure devotees, not only those who have preceded them, but those who follow.

In conclusion, we would like to sincerely thank as much as possible all those who have aided through their financial contributions or volunteer work to help this and other books and magazines of the Math come to publication. We humbly pray to those who read this work to kindly forgive any errors that may have been missed in proofreading.

Praying for the dust of the pure devotees' lotus feet,

I am the servant of the servant of the Vaishnavas,

Sri Bhakti Promode Puri.

23 Bhadra 1399 (Bengali year)

9 September 1992.

## Introduction

### **Srimad Bhakti Ballabha Tirtha Maharaj**

The contents of this book first appeared as a series of articles in Sri Chaitanya Vani (“Lord Chaitanya’s Gospel”), a monthly magazine exclusively devoted to spiritual subject matters. Those articles have here been brought together to form a single volume, the first of two which will eventually be published. Thanks to the dedicated efforts of Bhakti Varidhi Parivrajaka Maharaj, I hope that this will facilitate the devotees’ relishing the activities of the Lord’s associates. Sri Gauranga Mahaprabhu is the supreme truth and his associates are also transcendental, beyond matter. They are thus not accessible to the material senses, mind and intelligence. Since the transcendental is by nature self-manifest, one can only understand their glories through their causeless mercy. Just as the glories of the Lord are unlimited, so too are the glories of His devotees without end. Those who are not surrendered have no right of entry into these mysteries. Amongst those who are surrendered, too, there are varying degrees of surrender that produce varying degrees of ability to perceive their glories. The jiva who is covered by an assortment of anarthas cannot approach an understanding of the glories of Vishnu and the Vaishnavas. Even when such persons attempt to glorify them, the inevitable result is an insult. Nevertheless, if one recognizes one’s own unworthiness and humbly glorifies them in a prayerful attitude, the Vaishnavas will forgive them any flaws in their presentation. The satisfied glance of the Vaishnavas frees the jiva from his anarthas and brings him all auspiciousness. Even though the neophyte devotee is inadequate in so many ways and is thus unable to glorify Krishna and His devotees in a satisfactory way, if he does not do so his inadequacies will remain. The only hope for the fallen souls is that the Vaishnavas are merciful and that they will not find fault. Anyone who engages honestly in their service will find that by their mercy, all

obstacles are eliminated and that he attains all desired goals.

The pure devotee is very rare in this world; it is only due to great fortune that one can meet and associate with such a devotee. In the Chaitanya Charitamrita (1.1.20-1), it is said, “By meditating on the guru, the Vaishnava and the Lord, all obstacles are destroyed and all desires are fulfilled.” “All perfections come from the mercy of the Vaishnavas.” “The jiva who glorifies the qualities of the devotees is liberated. This have I heard from my guru and from the saintly persons.”

Chaitanya Mahaprabhu’s direct associates, the Six Goswamis, daily paid thousands of obeisances to the Vaishnavas. Indeed, one should spend some time meditating on the Vaishnavas every single day. An important element of devotional service is the regular observance of Vaishnavas’ appearance and disappearance days. On these occasions, one should remember them, pray to them for their mercy and glorify their qualities in kirtan. We at the Chaitanya Gaudiya Math annually publish a Vaishnava calendar in which all the different fasting days and feasts are indicated; all the known appearance and disappearance days which have been noted therein. The purpose of this book is to assist the devotees who wish to remember the Vaishnavas, to pray to them, and especially to glorify them in kirtan.

One chants the glories of the merciful devotees of Sri Chaitanya because he wishes to rid himself of all tendencies that lead away from devotional service and to develop attachment for Krishna. Sometimes, however, he finds that there is absolutely no change in his nature. He does not attain the desired result because he is not able to glorify them adequately due to his incapacities. Nevertheless, one cannot give it the effort because the lotus feet of the Vaishnavas are the only recourse for the fallen.

In researching the holy activities of Chaitanya’s associates, I became aware that many details of their lives are unavailable. Many of their appearance and disappearance tithis (lunar dates) and years are unknown, as are their places of birth, the names of their parents and their ancestors. This information could thus not be given in all cases. Some readers may find that the language used to describe the devotees’ lives is not sufficiently poetic and thus not find the joy in reading these accounts as they had hoped.

The chief editor and president of Chaitanya Vani magazine, the most venerable



Bhakti Promode Puri Goswami Maharaj has rained down countless blessings on us to enthuse us in the performance of this service. He is our siksha guru. He himself has contributed to this edition by making corrections wherever possible, and in some instances added new information about certain of the associates' lives.

We thank everyone who contributed for the publication of this book. I pray that the blessings of the guru, the Vaishnavas and the Supreme Lord fall upon them.

I pay thousands of prostrated obeisances to the lotus feet of my guru, the purifier of the sinful, to the lotus feet of my parama gurudeva, Srila Prabhupada Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur, to the feet of my siksha guru, Srila Bhakti Promode Puri Goswami Maharaj, and to all the other disciples of Srila Prabhupada, who are all siksha gurus, and I pray for their causeless mercy and their blessings.

Servant of the servant of the Vaishnavas,

Bhakti Ballabha Tirtha.

## **Volume 1**

### **Sri Jayadeva**

Srila Jayadeva Goswami appeared in either the eleventh or twelfth century of the Saka era. There is a difference of opinions about the place of his birth. The majority opinion holds that he hailed from the village of Kendubilva, presently in the district of Birbhum. Others hold that he was born in Orissa or in south India. Kendubilva is situated about twenty miles south of Siuri on the banks of the Ajaya River. In the Gauḍiya Vaiṣṇava Abhidhana it is stated that Jayadeva found his deities o Radha Madhava in the waters of the river. It is also stated there that he used to rest and worship at the temple of Shiva known as Kusesvara, which is also on the banks of the Ajay River. His father was named

Bhojadeva and mother Vama Devi.

### **Jayadeva's life at Champa Hati**

Jayadeva lived for a long time in Nabadwip during the reign of the king of Bengal, Lakshman Sena, making his home not far from the king's palace. At that time, the king's chief scholar was Govardhana Acharya. In Ashutosh Deb's Bengali dictionary, it is said that Jayadeva was Lakshman Sena's court poet. Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur wrote in his Nabadvipa-dhama-mahatmya that Lakshman Sena was delighted when he heard Jayadeva's hymn to the ten incarnations, the Dasavatara-stotra. The king learned from Govardhana Acharya that this hymn had been composed by Jayadeva and became desirous of meeting him. He went incognito to Jayadeva's house and when he saw him, he noticed that Jayadeva possessed the characteristics of a greatly powerful spiritual personality. Greatly impressed and attracted by him, the king revealed his identity to Jayadeva and invited him to come and live in the royal palace. Jayadeva was leading a very renounced life and was therefore unwilling to live in the opulent environment of the palace. He told the king that it was his desire to live in Jagannath Puri.

Lakshman Sena was disturbed by Jayadeva's intention. He quickly suggested to him that he stay in the village of Champa Hati, saying that it was a place suitable for him. He also promised him that he would never come to see him again. When Jayadeva agreed, Lakshman Sena had a cottage built for him in the village which was formerly known as Champaka-hatta. Previously, there had been a beautiful garden of champa trees and their flowers were sold in the village market. In this village, Mahaprabhu's associate Dvija Baninath had a vision of him in the Satya Yuga, seeing him in the form of a Brahmin whose skin was the color of a champa flower. Similarly, while living here, Jayadeva had a vision, first of Radha Madhava, then of their combined form as the golden champa-colored Gauranga Mahaprabhu.

The Lord gave him this vision and then told him to go to Jagannath Puri. Although Jayadeva was sad to leave the future abode of Lord Chaitanya, Jayadeva obeyed the Lord's command and went to Puri. It is said that he also

was engaged as the court poet of the king of Orissa. He spent the remainder of his life in the abode of Lord Jagannath. This is where he wrote the transcendental poem based on the sentiments of separation known as Gita-Govinda or Aṣṭapadi. Indeed, Mahaprabhu told Jayadeva while giving him the vision in Nabadwip that when he himself appeared there, he would take sannyas and go to Jagannath Puri where he would relish Jayadeva's Gita-Govinda.

Calcutta's Basumati Sahitya Mandir has published an edition of Jayadeva's Gita-Govinda. In the preface to that edition entitled "The life of Jayadeva," some other information is found. "Prior to the Muslim domination of Delhi, the king Manikya Chandra ordered the writing of the book Alaṅkara-sekhara, in which it is said that Jayadeva was the court poet of the king of Orissa. Sridhar Das, the son of one of the chief courtiers of Lakshman Sena, included many of Jayadeva's verses in his anthology Saduktikaṇṇamṛta, citing a work named Amiyabhakavya. One ancient manuscript of the Gita-Govinda has the colophon, "Jayadeva had a great reputation as a poet during the time of the King Lakshman Sena."

### **Jayadeva's marriage to Padmavati**

It is said that Jayadeva was obliged to marry his wife Padmavati at Jagannath's order. The story is told in the Visvakoṣa as follows: There was a Brahmin who had no children. He worshiped Jagannath for many years in the hope of having a son. Finally, he and his wife had a daughter and they named her Padmavati. When she came of marriageable age, the Brahmin brought her to Jagannath to offer her to his lotus feet. When he saw them, Jagannath himself said to the Brahmin, "I have a servant whose name is Jayadeva. He has given up family life and has dedicated himself to chanting my names. Give your daughter to him in marriage."

The Brahmin took his daughter to Jayadeva and asked him to marry his daughter. However, since Jayadeva had no desire to get married, he refused to agree to any arrangement. Then the Brahmin told him that it was Jagannath himself who had arranged this marriage and without another word, left, leaving his daughter behind. Jayadeva found himself totally unprepared for this situation and told the girl, "Tell me where you want to go and I will take you and leave

you there. You cannot stay here, however."

Padmavati started to cry and said, "My father brought me here to marry you on Jagannath Deva's order. You are my husband, my all in all. If you do not accept me, then I will fall down at your feet and die right here. You are my only hope, my lord."

The poet and scholar Jayadeva could not abandon her after such a heartfelt plea. So he became a householder.

### **The Lord helps Jayadeva write Gita-Govinda**

He established the worship of a Narayan deity and in the waves of love which he felt for this deity, he began writing Gita-Govinda, with its incomparable ambrosia. It is said that though Jayadeva is responsible for all the moods and sentiments which appear in the Gita-Govinda, he had some reticence about writing that Krishna fell down at Radharani's feet to beg her forgiveness when she was angry with him for having deceived her.

On that day, when he left the house to take his bath in the ocean, Lord Jagannath himself came in, disguised as Jayadeva, opened his manuscript and completed the verse he had started smara-garala-khaṇḍanaṁ mama sirasi maṇḍanaṁ with the words dehi pada-pallavam udaram: "Place the noble sprout of your foot as an ornament on my head, it dispels the poison of love in separation." (GG 10.8)

Padmavati was surprised to see her husband back so soon from his bath and asked, "What are you doing here? You just left a minute ago." The disguised Jagannath answered, "I thought of something on my way. I was afraid I might forget so I came back to write it down."

Not long after Jagannath had left, the real Jayadeva returned. This time, Padmavati was really astonished to see him. She said, "You just left to go and take your bath. Just a few moments ago you were writing in your manuscript and then you left. How could you have finished and come back so quickly? I am

beginning to wonder who that was and who you are?" Jayadeva was clever enough to guess what had happened and he went and looked at his unfinished text and saw the words that the Lord himself had written. His entire body was covered with horripilation and tears came pouring from his eyes. He called Padmavati and said to her, "You are so fortunate. Your life has been made worthy. You have had the good fortune to see the Lord himself. I am so lowly that I did not have that opportunity!"

### **Jagannath's love for Gita-Govinda**

There is a legend told in Jagannath Puri that there was a flower gardener's daughter who had learned Gita-Govinda and would sing it with great emotion. Jagannath was attracted by her singing and would go to listen to her, only returning to the temple after she had finished singing.

One day, when the king of Orissa came to see the deity, he saw that the Lord's body was covered in dust and his clothes were filled with thorns. He asked the pujaris the reason for the Lord's disheveled condition, but no one could explain how it had come about. The servants of the deity were afraid that they would be punished, but that night, Jagannath appeared to the king in a dream and explained that no one was to blame for his soiled condition that day. He had gone to listen to the gardener's daughter and that the dust and thorns had covered him when in the garden.

The king was astonished to have received such information in a dream and he immediately sent for the gardener's daughter to be brought to the court in a palanquin. After making inquiries from her, he decided that she should sing for Jagannath in the temple, rather than obliging the Lord to leave the temple and get all dirty. Ever since that time, girls named deva-dasis have been engaged by the temple to sing Gita-Govinda for Jagannath's pleasure.

Many other amazing and miraculous events surrounded the life of Jayadeva. He used to serve his deities Radha and Madhava in a trance of divine love. It is said that just as the devotee dedicates himself to the Lord, the Lord also dedicates himself to his devotee. One day, Jayadeva was thatch his roof

under the unforgiving midday sun. Jagannath saw the discomfort of his devotee and decided to help him finish the work quickly by handing him the rope needed to bale the straw and removing the finished bundles and placing them on the roof. Jayadeva thought that it was Padmavati who was helping him in this way. But when he came down from the roof after finishing much earlier than expected, he saw no one there. He asked his wife and she told him that she had been busy elsewhere at the time. He was curious about what had happened, but struck with wonder when he went into the deity room and saw that Madhava's hands were black from handling the straw. He was thus able to understand that it was Madhava himself who had come to help him thatch the roof. He fell down before his Lord and started to cry.

## **Mahaprabhu appreciates Gita-Govinda**

In the last twelve years of Mahaprabhu's lila, he was absorbed in Radha's mood and constantly relishing this hidden spirit of love. During this time, he would savor the songs of the Gita-Govinda.

Day and night, the Lord would speak as though he were Radha when meeting Uddhava. He would also relish the poems of Chandi Das, Jayadeva and Vidyapati. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 1.13.41-2)

Mahaprabhu was never pleased to hear books or verses opposed to siddhanta, nor did he like hearing rasabhasa, an improper mixture of devotional sentiments. It was the practice of Svarupa Damodar Goswami to examine all works of literature to find out whether their conclusions were correct. Only then would he allow them to be heard by the Lord. Sri Svarupa Damodar used to make Mahaprabhu very happy by singing the songs of Vidyapati, Chandi Das and Gita-Govinda. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.10.113-5)

Svarupa Damodar would sing songs that reflected the moods of the Lord whenever they arose, while Ramananda Raya selected verses from Vidyapati, Chandi Das and Gita-Govinda.

The Lord returned to external consciousness for a moment and told Svarupa to

sing some sweet song. Svarupa sang one of Vidyapati's songs and then songs from the Gita-Govinda, which were greatly appreciated by the Lord. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.17.62)

candi dasa vidyapati    rayera nāṭaka giti

karṇamṛta sri gita-govinda /

svarupa ramananda sane mahaprabhu ratri-dine

gaya, sune parama ananda //

Day and night, Mahaprabhu ecstatically relished the songs of Chandi Das, Vidyapati and Ramananda Raya's plays, as well as Krishna-karṇamṛta and Gita-Govinda in the company of Svarupa and Ramananda. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.2.77)

## **Jayadeva and the robbers**

On another occasion, Jayadeva wished to put on a festival for his deities Radha and Madhava, but he was short of money. He decided to travel in order to collect some funds by using his poetic skills. On his return journey, he was stopped by robbers who not only stole his money but cut up his hands and feet and threw him down a well to die. Despite the pain, Jayadeva shouted out the names of the Lord as loudly as he could.

After Jayadeva had spent three days in this way, the king happened that way on a hunting expedition and heard the sound of the holy names coming from the well. The king approached the well out of curiosity and was horrified to see Jayadeva in this serious condition. He had him taken out of the well and brought back to his palace where he had him treated. Under the queen's care, Jayadeva was gradually returned to health.

Both the king and queen were charmed by Jayadeva's sweet singing of the Gita-Govinda as well as by his saintly character. They immediately sent for

Padmavati and had her brought to their home. The king and queen took initiation from Jayadeva and heard about Krishna from him and started to make their lives successful through service to the Lord and his devotees. One day, the robbers who had attacked Jayadeva came to the king's palace as guest disguised as devotees. Even though Jayadeva recognized who they were, he gave them the honor that was due to their outward appearance and arranged for the appropriate hospitality to be proffered them. The robbers, however, did not understand Jayadeva's forgiving and generous nature and, fearing capture and punishment, thought it best to leave without accepting the royal hospitality. Jayadeva understood their fear and asked the king to give them a large sum of money and an escort and send them on their way.

After they had gone a certain distance, the robbers said to the escort of soldiers, "You need not go any further. We would like to tell you a secret message to convey to the king, however. Prior to becoming Vaishnavas we were the servants of a certain king who for very good reason ordered us to murder this priest, Jayadeva. So we cut up his hands and feet and left him to die. Because he was afraid that this secret would come out, this priest gave us a lot of money and asked us to leave quickly."

The Earth herself was unable to tolerate the telling of such a great lie and so she opened up and swallowed the entire gang of thieves. When Shukracharya, the guru of the demons, told Bali Maharaj not to give the three feet of land demanded by Vamana Deva, Bali answered that he was the grandson of Prahlad Maharaj. How could he go back on his word like a miser once he had committed himself to giving in charity? He substantiated this by saying,

na hy asatyat paro'dharma

iti hovaca bhur iyam /

sarvaṁ soddhum alaṁ madhye

ṛte'likaparaṁ naram //

This Earth has said, "There is no greater irreligiousness than untruth. I can bear any burden other than that of a person who constantly lies." (SB 8.20.4)

The goddess of the Earth was unable to support the weight of these sinful liars and so she swallowed them up. As they blasphemed the great devotee of the



Lord, they met their doom in the bowels of the earth.

The servants of the king who had accompanied these robbers were amazed to see them punished for their offense to Jayadeva right before their very eyes. They came back to the king's palace and told him everything that they had witnessed. The king inquired from Jayadeva about the robbers and he told the entire story. He said, "O king! A saintly man does not seek revenge from those who have done evil toward him. He attempts to satisfy them by polite behavior. Even so, the Lord's flawless will makes them suffer the consequences of their own sinfulness, as he did in this case."

### **Padmavati is tested**

Jayadeva's wife became a close friend of the queen. In those days, the custom of a wife dying with her husband was in vogue. After her brother's death, the queen was mortified that her sister-in-law would have to die on the funeral pyre with him. Padmavati said to the queen, "From the moment that her husband dies, a faithful wife's life airs leave her body."

When the queen heard this, she decided to test Padmavati herself. One day she announced to Padmavati that her husband Jayadeva had suddenly died. As soon as this news entered her ears, Padmavati gave up her life. This shocked the queen and she began to cry out of a sense of guilt for being responsible for her death. The king also came to Jayadeva and begged him to return the life to his wife's corpse. The great devotee Jayadeva whispered the name of Krishna into Padmavati's ear and she opened her eyes as though she were just waking up. Having seen this manifestation of both Jayadeva and Padmavati's glories, the king and queen as well as all their courtiers and servants paid their obeisances at their feet.

### **Jayadeva goes to Vrindavan**

After this, Jayadeva wanted to see Vrindavan. He took leave of the king and queen and then, taking his deities, Radha and Madhava with him, set off on the long journey. Once in Vrindavan, he began to serve his deities in a spot near Keshi Ghat. When they heard Jayadeva sing the Gita-Govinda in his sweet voice, the residents of the dham were entranced. One merchant built a large temple for the deities on that spot.

It is said that Jayadeva lived in Vrindavan for many years and then returned to his birthplace in Kendubilva. Each day, he would make the long walk to the Ganges to take his bath there. One day, for some reason or another, he was unable to make it. Ganga Devi was so kind to him that she came personally to the village of Kendubilva so that he could take his bath in her waters. It is said that he died there in Kendubilva and every year a large festival is held there in his memory on the first day of the month of Magh.

There is a difference of opinions about where Jayadeva finished his life. Some say Puri, while others say that he returned to Kendubilva, and others say that he went to Vrindavan. Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur has stated his opinion that Jayadeva died in Jagannath Puri. Though some people say that Jayadeva returned to Kendubilva to spend his last days, there is no indication anywhere that his Radha-Madhava deities were brought there. In fact, these deities were taken by the king of Jaipur to a place named Ghati sometime after Jayadeva's death and they are still being served in the Jaipur area. Jayadeva's disappearance day is on the sixth day of the waning moon of the month of Paush.

## **Sri Madhavendra Puripada**

Srila Madhavendra Puri appeared in the 14th century. Prior to Mahaprabhu's appearance, his seniors, parents and gurus, who are his servants and eternal associates, take their birth.

Whenever Krishna descends to the earth, he first sends down his seniors. These

include his father, his mother, his guru and all the other persons he considers to be the objects of his respect. He arranges that these persons should take birth before he does. Madhavendra Puri, Isvara Puri, Sachi and Jagannath, Advaita Acharya, are amongst those who appeared in this way. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 1.3.92-4)

Later in the Chaitanya Charitamrita (1.13.52-55), the same thing is described in the following way:

Whenever the son of the king of Vraja decides to appear on earth in order to fulfill a particular desire, then he first sends down his seniors. I will briefly name some of them as it is not possible to do so extensively: Sachi, Jagannath, Madhava Puri, Keshava Bharati, Isvara Puri, Advaita Acharya, Srivasa Pandit, Acharyaratna, Pundarika Vidyanidhi, Hari Das Thakur. The resident of Sylhet named Upendra Mishra was a scholarly Vaishnava, rich and possessed of saintly qualities.

### **The disciplic succession**

Srila Madhavendra Puri appeared in the 14th century. He was a guru of the Brahma or Madhva sampradaya, one of the four (Brahma, Sri, Rudra and Sanaka) Vaishnava lineages that purify the world in the Kali Yuga. The Madhva lineage has been transcribed in books like Gaura-gaṇoddesa-dipika, Prameya-ratnavali and the writings of Gopal Guru Goswami. The same set of verses is found with some small differences in the Bhakti-ratnakara (5.2149-2162). The following is the version as taken from the Gaura-gaṇoddesa-dipika:

paravyomesvarasyasic chiṣyo brahma jagat-patiḥ /

tasya siṣyo narado'bhut vyasas tasyapa siṣyatam //

suko vyasasya siṣyatvaṁ prapto jnanavabodhanat /

vyasal labdha-kṛṣṇa-dikṣo madhvacaryo mahayasah //

tasya siṣyo'bhavat padmanabhacaryo mahasayaḥ /  
tasya siṣyo naraharis tacchiṣyo madhava-dvijah //  
akṣobhyas tasya siṣyo'bhut tac-chiṣyo jayatirthakaḥ /  
tasya siṣyo jnana-sindhus tasya siṣyo mahanidhiḥ //  
vidyanidhis tasya siṣyo rajendras tasya sevakaḥ /  
jayadharma munis tasya siṣyo yad-gaṇa-madhyataḥ //  
srimad-viṣṇu-puri yas tu bhaktiratnavali-kṛtiḥ /  
jayadharmasya siṣyo'bhud brahmaṇyaḥ puruṣottamaḥ //  
vyasatirthas tasya siṣyo yas cakre viṣṇusaṁhitam /  
sriman lakṣmipatis tasya siṣyo bhaktirasasrayaḥ //  
tasya siṣyo madhavendro yad-dharmo'yaṁ pravartitaḥ /  
tasya siṣyo >bhavat sriman isvarakhya-puri-yatiḥ //  
kalayamasa sṛṅgaram yaḥ sṛṅgara-phalatmakah /  
advaitam kalayamasa dasya-sakhye phale ubhe /  
isvarakhya-purim gaura urarikṛtya gaurave /  
jagad aplavayamasa prakṛtaprakṛtatmakam //

Brahma, the master of this universe, was the disciple of the lord of the spiritual world. His disciple was Narada and Vyasa became the disciple of Narada. Suka became the disciple of Vyasa through the awakening of spiritual knowledge from him. Madhvacharya took initiation in the Krishna mantra from Vyasa. His disciple was Padmanabhacarya, whose disciple was Narahari, who was followed by Madhava Dvija. Akshobhya was his disciple, then Jayatirtha, Jnanasindhu, Mahanidhi, Vidyanidhi and Rajendra followed. Jayadharma Muni was one of

Rajendra's many disciples and Vishnu Puri, the author of Bhakti-ratnavali and Purushottam, the lover of Brahmin culture became his disciples. Vyasa Tirtha, the author of Vishnu-saṁhita was the disciple of Purushottam. Lakshmipati Tirtha, a reservoir of devotion, was the disciple of Vyasa Tirtha. Madhavendra Puri was the disciple of Lakshmipati, and it is by him that this religion was founded. His disciple, the sannyasi Isvara Puri, took up the mood of conjugal devotion, while Advaita Acharya [also the disciple of Madhavendra] took up the moods of servitude and friendship. Gaura accepted Isvara Puri as his guru, and then flooded the material and spiritual worlds [with love].

Thus, Madhavendra Puri was the disciple of Lakshmipati Tirtha. Madhavendra Puri's disciples included Isvara Puri, Advaita Acharya, Paramananda Puri (a Brahmin from the Tirhut area), Brahmananda Puri, Sri Ranga Puri, Pundarika Vidyānidhi, Raghupati Upadhyaya, etc. Nityananda is said by some to be Madhavendra Puri's disciple, others say that Lakshmipati was his guru, while in the Premavilasa, it is said that he too was Isvara Puri's disciple.

Bhaktivinoda Thakur writes: "Madhavendra Puri was a well-known sannyasi of the Madhva-sampradaya. His grand-disciple was Sri Chaitanya Mahāprabhu. Prior to his appearance, there was no evidence of prema bhakti in the Madhva line. In his verse, *ayi dina-dayardra-natha* (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.4.197), the seed of the religious doctrines of Chaitanya Mahāprabhu can be found." Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Prabhupada adds, "Madhavendra Puri was the first shoot of the desire tree of divine love which came out of the Madhva lineage. Prior to his appearance, there was no sign of the conjugal mood of devotion in the Madhva line."

## **Madhavendra and Nityananda Prabhu**

Nityananda met Madhavendra Puri while wandering through the pilgrimage sites in western India. As soon as they saw each other they were overcome with the symptoms of ecstatic love. This event is described in the ninth chapter of the Adikhaṇḍa of the Chaitanya Bhāgavat:

As Nityananda Prabhu wandered in this way, he suddenly encountered

Madhavendra Puri. Madhavendra was the embodiment of love, as were all his associates. He ate nothing other than Krishna rasa, and Krishna dwells in his body. Advaita Acharya was his disciple--how can I glorify him sufficiently. When Nityananda saw Madhavendra Puri, he fainted and became motionless with love. As soon as Madhava Puri saw Nityananda, he too fell down in a faint, completely forgetting himself. Gauranga repeatedly said that Madhavendra Puri was the harbinger of the ecstatic mood of devotion.

Nityananda Prabhu said, "I have visited many holy sites, but today I have been fulfilled by the sight of Madhavendra Puri. I have finally achieved the true reward of visiting the holy places. I have never seen the symptoms of love anywhere else. Madhavendra loses consciousness simply upon seeing a cloud in the sky."

Madhavendra embraced Nityananda Prabhu and wet him with his tears. He began to describe Nityananda's glories, becoming absorbed in this description. He took Nityananda to his breast; his throat was so choked with tears that he could not speak. He felt such deep affection for Nityananda that he would not let him go. He finally spoke, saying, "I knew that Krishna was merciful toward me, for he has given me a companion like Nityananda. Anyone who feels even the slightest enmity for Nityananda can never be dear to Krishna, no matter how much of a devotee he is." (CBh 1.9.154-169)

The Bhakti-ratnakara also describes the glories of Madhavendra Puri and states that Nityananda treated him as a guru:

Madhavendra Puri is the embodiment of ecstatic loving devotion; simply by remembering his name, all perfections are achieved. Isvara Puri, Ranga Puri and so many of his other disciples were similarly intoxicated with the wine of devotion. Madhavendra had many disciples throughout Bengal and Orissa, all of whom were devotees and fixed on prema bhakti. (Bhakti-ratnakara 5.2272-4)

A few days later, in a holy place on the west coast of India, Nityananda met Madhavendra Puri. Who could describe the manifestations of love that arose upon their meeting? Only those who were there can know. Madhavendra treated Nityananda as a friend, an equal, but Nitai treated him like a superior. Madhavendra said, "I know that Krishna has been merciful toward me, for he

has given me a companion like Nityananda." On the other hand, Nityananda never treated him as anything but a guru. (Bhakti-ratnakara 5.2330-2334)

## **Giridhari Gopal**

After taking sannyas in Katwa, Mahaprabhu went to Shantipur and spent some time at Advaita Acharya's house. Then he proceeded from there to Sri Purushottam (Puri), following the path through Chatrabhog along the banks of the Ganges. He traveled through Atisar, Panihati, and Barahanagar until finally he arrived at the border of the kingdom of Utkala (Orissa) at the place called Vṛddhamantresvara. Nityananda Prabhu, Mukunda Datta, Jagadananda and Damodar were with him. They came to the town of Remuna in the district of Balesor where they came to visit the deity Khirchora Gopinath. Afterward, Mahaprabhu recounted to his companions the story of Madhavendra Puri as he had heard it from his guru Isvara Puri, also telling how Khirchora Gopinath had earned his name:

One day Madhavendra Puri was circumambulating Govardhana in a state of total intoxication and absorption in love for Krishna. When he arrived at Govinda Kund, he took his bath and sat down under a nearby tree to perform his evening sandhya meditation and rituals. While he was so doing, a young cowherd boy carrying a pot of milk approached him and said with a smile, "What have you been thinking? Why don't you ask for something to eat? I have brought you some milk, drink some." When he saw the beautiful lad, Madhavendra Puri was so overcome that he completely forgot his hunger and thirst. Instead he asked him, "Who are you? Where do you live? How did you know that I had not eaten?" The cowherd boy answered, "I am a cowherd and I live in this village. In our village, no one ever goes hungry. Some people beg for food, but if someone doesn't ask, then I bring him something to eat. The women came here to fetch water and they saw that you had not eaten. They sent me here with this milk for you. But it is nearly milking time and I will have to leave. I'll come back later to fetch the pot."

Madhavendra Puri was astonished to see the boy walk away and disappear. He drank the milk and then washed the pot and put it aside, waiting for the cowherd

boy to return for it. He sat under the tree chanting the Holy Names until the end of the night when he started to doze off. While asleep, he had a dream in which the cowherd youth came to him and led him by the hand to a wooded bower. Gopal said, "I stay here in this bower. I am very uncomfortable due to the summer heat, the rains and the winter cold. Go and tell the village folk to help you uncover me, and take me to the top of the hill and build a shelter for me, and bathe me with cool, clear water. I have been waiting for you for a long time, wondering when you would come to serve me. I was waiting for your loving service so that I could show myself and thereby save the entire universe. My name is Gopal, the lifter of Govardhana. Krishna's great grandson, Aniruddha's son Vajra, established my service so many years ago, but the sevait hid me here when he fled out of fear of the Muslims. Since then I have been here. It is good that you have finally come here, now please dig me up."

When Madhavendra woke up, he began to cry in an intense mood of love, thinking, "Alas! Krishna himself came to me in the form of a cowherd boy and I was unable to recognize him!" However, after a few moments he brought himself under control in order to carry out Gopal's orders. He took his morning bath and then gathered the village folk together and said, "Gopal, the lifter of Govardhana, is the deity of this village, but he is buried in this bower. Go and bring shovels, we have to dig him up and release him." The village people enthusiastically started to clear the bower and soon discovered a large deity who was covered in earth and weeds. The strongest of the local people lifted the deity up and carried him to the top of the hill where they placed him on a large rock throne. In order to carry out the grand abhishek ceremony, the local Brahmins had water from Govinda Kund filtered and carried to the site in a hundred new jugs. When word got out of the discovery of the deity and that his puja and abhishek would soon be held, a joyful noise arose in all directions, musicians played on their instruments and the people danced and sang. The mountain was covered with all kinds of offerings, ghee, milk, yogurt and sandesa, all gifts of the local people.

Madhavendra Puri himself performed the abhishek bathing ceremony. First of all, he cleaned the accumulated dirt from the body of the deity according to the regulations, for the scriptures say that barley flour, wheat flour, and a powder made from *symplocos racemosa*, as well as the powder of pistachio nuts, saffron and pulses, are to be used to clean the deity's body. A brush made from long *uṣīra* grasses and the hair of a cow's tail is also to be used. Afterwards, the body of Gopal was made shiny with oil, before he was again bathed in *panca-gavya*



(milk, yogurt, clarified butter, cow's urine and dung) and then in pancamṛta (milk, yogurt, clarified butter, honey and sugar). These things are described in the Hari-bhakti-vilasa's sixth chapter, where it is said,

tataḥ saṅkhabhutenaiiva

kṣireṇa snapayet kramat /

dadhna ghr̥tena madhuna

khaṇḍena ca pṛthak pṛthak //

Then bathe the deity with milk poured from a conch shell, then with yogurt, clarified butter, honey and then sugar, one after the other. (Hbv 6.30)

After this, Gopal was bathed with the hundred jugs of water. This was the maha-snana, in which ghee and water are used in equal parts, and a total of a hundred seers of water are needed. A seer equals about two pounds. After bathing the deity in this way and then oiling him once again, he was bathed in water scented with sandalwood and perfumes and poured from a conch. The Hari-bhakti-vilasa prescribes 100 palas of water for the bath, another 25 of oil for the body, and then 2,000 palas for the maha-snana.

After the maha-snana or great bath was completed, the entire body of the deity was dried with a cloth and he was dressed in a clean cloth and decorated with sandalwood, tulasi and flower garlands. Just as Krishna instructed the cowherds at the end of the Dvapara Yuga to worship Govardhana with a mountain of foodstuffs, so in the Kali Yuga, Madhavendra Puri ordered a mountain of food to be prepared for Giridhari Gopal. Ten Brahmins were engaged in preparing the rice, another five in cooking vegetable preparations, another five or six Brahmins prepared various types of breads, which was all brought together in one place to make heaps which took the shape of a mountain. The mountain of rice was surrounded by many clay pots filled with soups, cooked vegetable preparations, milk, yogurt, whey, sikharinī (a drink made of yogurt, milk, sugar, camphor and pepper), sweet rice, butter, and cream, etc. When the mountain of food was ready, Madhavendra Puri made the offering along with many jugs filled with water. Gopal, who had not eaten for such a long time, hungrily ate everything he was offered. Even so, by his merciful touch, all the pots were again filled. Only Madhavendra saw how he did this.

Afterwards, Madhavendra offered a mouthwash to the deity and then pan. Then he performed the arati ceremony, after which he brought a new bed for Gopal to rest upon. When Gopal was finally taking rest, Madhavendra Puri fed the prasada of the Annakūṭa festival, first to all the Brahmins and then to all the people, men, women and children, of the village.

Word spread to all the villages of the area that Gopal had made his appearance, and people from each village took turns having their own feast in his honor on different days. "The people of Vraja are naturally affectionate toward Krishna. And Krishna, too, is affectionate to them."

In time, the rich kshatriyas had a temple built for Gopal and gave him ten thousand cows. Madhavendra Puri remained there for two years in Gopal's service until one day he again had a dream in which Gopal told him that he still suffered from the heat and that it was only by smearing Malaya sandalwood that he would be freed of the problem. Madhavendra was overjoyed to receive the direct order of the Lord and after engaging a qualified person to serve him, started off on a journey to the east to find Malaya sandalwood. Malaya refers to the Malabar Coast in Kerala at the very south of India, in what is known as the Western Ghats. This area is also known as Nilgiri or Malaya Parvata. Sandalwood is so closely associated with this area that the word malayaja ("born of Malaya") is a synonym for the perfumed wood.

## **The story of Khirchora Gopinath**

Madhavendra Puri stopped at Advaita Acharya's house in Shantipur where he initiated him. From there he went on until he arrived at Remuna. Seeing the wonderful appearance of Gopinath, Madhavendra was overwhelmed with love, and he sang his names and danced for some time. He asked one of Gopinath's Brahmin servants what foods were offered to the deity. The Brahmin answered: "In the evening we give Gopinath twelve bowls of amṛta-keli, a thickened milk preparation which is like the nectar of the gods. It is famous everywhere as Gopinath's kṣīra, and no offering anywhere in the world is its equal."

At that very moment, the servants of Gopinath started to offer the amṛta-keli to

their deity. Madhavendra thought that if he could just get a taste of this preparation, he would be able to one day make it himself and offer it to his own Gopal. However, this very thought shamed him, as his desire for the food that was intended for the Lord was improper. After watching the arati ceremony, Madhavendra went outside and sat in the empty marketplace, chanting the Holy Names. Madhavendra followed the *ayacaka-vṛtti*, which means that he would never ask for food from anyone, only accepting what was offered him spontaneously. He was able to do this because he never felt hunger or thirst, as he was constantly engaged in drinking the nectar of prema and that kept him satisfied.

In the meantime, the pujari finished his duties and was taking rest when he had a vision of the deity in a dream telling him, "Get up! Open the door. I have put aside a bowl of kṣīra for the sannyasi. It is hidden behind the pleats of my dhoti. You did not see me put it there because of my Maya. The sannyasi, whose name is Madhava Puri, is sitting in the marketplace. Quickly take this kṣīra to him." (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.4.127-129)

The pujari was startled by the dream and immediately got up. He bathed and then opened the door to the altar and indeed found a bowl of the kṣīra behind his cloth. He took the bowl and set off to find Madhavendra Puri. He began to wander through the market, shouting, "I have kṣīra here for Madhava Puri. Gopinath has stolen it for you. Take it and eat it with joy, for there is no person as fortunate as you in the three worlds."

When he heard this, Madhavendra approached the pujari and identified himself. The pujari gave him the kṣīra and then fell at his feet like a stick to offer his obeisances. When Madhavendra Puri heard the whole story from the pujari, he was overcome by feelings of love for Krishna. He respectfully ate the prasāda and then, after washing the clay bowl, broke it into many small pieces and wrapped them up in his outer garment. Each day afterward, he would eat a piece of the clay bowl and again feel the same ecstatic love. Knowing that word of this would spread the next morning, Madhavendra Puri became fearful of the fame that would befall him and the people who would crowd around him. So, before dawn he paid his obeisance to Gopinath and left for Puri.

When he arrived in Puri, he visited Jagannath and became ecstatic with love at seeing him. But his fame had reached Puri even before he did and countless people came to see him and to pay him their respects. "The nature of fame in this

world is well known. Even if one does not search it out, it comes anyway as a result of one's destiny. Though Madhavendra Puri feared fame and ran away from it, Krishna prema brings its own reputation to one who possesses it." Though Madhavendra Puri wanted to avoid the fame that Krishna had bestowed upon him, he was not able to flee because he was bound to search out the sandalwood he had sworn to find for Gopal. He explained his need for sandalwood to the servants and directors of the Jagannath temple. Some of those people who had contacts with the king of the land interceded for him and collected both sandalwood and camphor on his behalf through these contacts. Then they arranged for another Brahmin and a servant to travel with him and to help him carry the load; in order to help him avoid customs duties he was given an official exemption paper. As he was on his return route, Madhavendra Puri stopped in Remuna again. Once again he spent some time dancing and singing kirtan in a state of loving absorption before Gopinath, and again accepted the kṣīra prasāda from the pujari. That night he slept in the temple. Once again he had a vision of Gopal, who spoke to him as follows: "Listen, Madhava. I have received all the sandalwood and camphor. Now grind and make a paste of it and smear it on Gopinath's body. Gopinath and I are one and the same person; if you give him the sandalwood, I will feel the cooling effect. Don't hesitate, don't doubt this message at all. Just believe and accept my instruction: give me the sandalwood."

Having received this dream message, Madhavendra Puri called the pujaris and servants of Gopinath together and let them know what he had been told. When they heard that Gopinath would be getting sandalwood paste, they were very happy, as it was summertime. Madhavendra had his two companions as well as two other persons daily ground the sandalwood into a paste. They stayed there until the sandalwood was gone, all of it having been used in the service of Gopinath. At the end of the summer season, with the coming of the rains, Madhavendra returned to Puri where he observed Caturmasya.

### **Madhavendra's feelings of separation**

At Puri, the exemplary character of Madhavendra's love for Krishna was demonstrated. In this regard Prabhupada Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati wrote, "The

feeling of separation from Krishna, or transcendental vipralambha is the only practice by which the spirit soul can achieve perfection. Material feelings of separation give rise to a despondency which reveals the attachment that one has for matter, whereas the despondency which comes out of the feelings of separation for Krishna are the best proof of the desire to bring pleasure to his senses. The desire to bring pleasure to Krishna's senses shown by Madhavendra Puri, the great soul at the root of this movement, is the ideal example to follow for anyone who wishes to serve the Lord. It is especially worth remarking that Mahaprabhu and his intimate energies later followed this example and made it their standard."

Madhavendra Puri was completely indifferent to sensual enjoyment, but his eagerness to serve Gopal was so great that he traveled a thousand miles on foot over roads that were full of danger. His readiness to return with sandalwood over the same path was so sincere that Gopal had mercy on him.

Gopal gave Madhavendra Puri the order to bring him the sandalwood paste in order to show the world the depth of his love. It took a great effort for Madhavendra to bring the sandalwood back to Remuna, but it was a joy for him and he did not experience it as a difficulty. Gopal gave him this order in order to test him; it started as a test, but in the end he was merciful to his devotee. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.4.189).

Out of his mercy, Madhavendra Puri bestowed love for Krishna on a Sanoriya Brahmin in Mathura. He accepted food from this Brahmin, knowing him to be a Vaishnava. By this he showed how the daiva-varṇasrama system is meant to operate. According to Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur, members of the business community (vaisyas) in the west of India are divided into several castes: Agrawalas, Kanwars, Sanwars, etc. Of these, the Agrawalas are considered to be very pure, while the two other groups are considered fallen as a result of their own actions. Those Brahmins who perform the ritual activities for the Kanwars and Sanwars, who are gold and jewelry merchants, are known as Sanoriya Brahmins. Normally, because of these low caste associations, they are considered to be fallen as a caste and sannyasi refuse to accept food in their homes.

Later on, Mahaprabhu himself went to take food at this Sanoriya Brahmin's house between his visits to Kashi and Prayag because he knew that Madhavendra Puri had been merciful to him. This was the example that he set.

He also showed him the respect that was due to senior personality, saying, "You are my guru, and I am practically your disciple. It is not fitting for a guru to pay obeisances to a disciple." (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.17.170)

## **Madhavendra and Isvara Puri**

There is one last important incident in Madhavendra Puri's immaculate life.

Ramachandra Puri and Isvara Puri were two of his initiated disciples. However, due to disrespect for the guru, Ramachandra was unable to get his mercy, whereas Isvara Puri became blessed through his single-minded devotion to him and was thus able to attain the highest level of pure love for Krishna.

Ramachandra was unable to understand the sweetness and supremacy of his guru deva's feelings of separation and had the audacity to give him advice based on knowledge of Brahman. Madhavendra Puri became so angry that he completely ignored him. Even though he was such a great loving devotee, Madhavendra Puri showed anger to his own disciple when he committed an offense and chastised him severely, using harsh words. When he heard him giving such instructions, he became angry and said,

"Get away, get away, you most sinful rascal! I am dying from the distress of not having received Krishna's mercy, of not having attained Mathura, and you come to add to my misery! Don't show your face to me again, go wherever you like! If I see you while I am dying I will take a lower birth. I am dying from the distress of not having attained Krishna and this lowly fool is teaching me about Brahman."

As a result, Madhavendra Puri withdrew his blessings from his disciple and he started to develop material desires. He became a dry philosopher without any interest in Krishna. Not only that but he became critical of everyone, devoting himself to criticism. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.8.20-25)

Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Srila Prabhupada commented on this in his Anubhasya, "Even though Ramachandra Puri saw his own guru suffering of

separation from Krishna, he was incapable of recognizing the transcendental nature of this transport of emotions. He judged his guru to be an ordinary man and took his mood to be material, the result of some material insufficiency. As a result he tried to explain to him the value of experiencing the oneness of Brahman. Madhavendra Puri reacted to his disciple's stupidity and disregard for his instructions and thus stopped wishing for his well-being. He abandoned him and drove him away." The words "material desires" (vasana) means "the desire for dry knowledge" and from that arose the tendency to criticize the devotees.

On the other hand, Isvara Puri not only adhered to his guru's teaching but served him physically and thus received his mercy. He served the lotus feet of his spiritual master, even to the point of personally cleaning his urine and feces, as well as helping him to remember Krishna's name and pastimes. In this way he satisfied him completely.

Isvara Puri served the great man, personally cleaning his urine and feces. He continuously repeated the name of Krishna so that he could hear him, and recounted Krishna's pastimes. Madhavendra Puri was so pleased with him that he embraced him and blessed him, saying, "May you have the wealth of love for Krishna!" From that time onward, Isvara Puri became an ocean of love for Krishna, while Ramachandra Puri became a mine of insults. These two personalities thus became witness to the results of pleasing or displeasing the great soul. Madhavendra Puri taught this truth through these two. He was the spiritual master of the whole world and he gave the gift of love of God. Repeating this verse, he left this world,

ayi dinadayardra natha he,

mathuranatha kadavalokyase |

hṛdayaṁ tvad-aloka-kataraṁ

dayita bhramyati kiṁ karomy aham ||

"O lord, whose heart softens at seeing the condition of the unfortunate! Oh lord of Mathura, when will I see you? My heart is filled with pain from not seeing you, oh my love, and is confused. What can I do?"

When Mahaprabhu recited this verse he become intoxicated with love and Nityananda had to hold him to calm him down. (3.8.26-31)

Madhavendra Puri's disappearance day is the Sukla Dvadasi of the month of Phalgun.

## **Isvara Puripada**

Isvara Puri was born in the town of Kumara Hatta on the full moon day of the month of Jyeshtha to a family of Brahmins hailing from Rarha. Kumara Hatta is in the in the 24 Paraganas district about two miles from the Halisahar train station. The local people indicate the neighborhood known as Mukhopadhyaya Para as the site of his birth home.

After Mahaprabhu took sannyas, Srivasa Pandit and his brothers were unable to tolerate Nabadwip with its reminders of him and so moved to Kumara Hatta. The site of their house is said to be near a temple by Chaitanya Doba, which is the name given to Isvara Puri's birthplace. The word *ḍoba* means "a pool of water." When Chaitanya Mahaprabhu came to Kumara Hatta, he took some earth from this place and wrapped it in his cloth. Numerous people since followed his example with the result that they made a pit that has since filled with water. The site is especially well-known in the area.

## **The mercy of the spiritual master**

Isvara Puri is a sannyas name. Though it is not known what his name was prior to taking sannyas, we know that his father's name was Shyamasundara Acharya. Isvara Puri took initiation from the embodiment of nectarean devotional love, Madhavendra Puri. Madhavendra Puri was pleased with Isvara Puri's guileless, affectionate and loving service and thus drenched him in blessings, so that he too became immersed in the ocean of love for Krishna. If one's spiritual master is



satisfied, then a disciple is fortunate to attain all auspiciousness and the fulfillment of all his desires. If the guru is unhappy with his disciple then he will only know inauspiciousness. These are teachings that are found in the exemplary life of Madhavendra Puri. Ramachandra Puri was also Madhavendra Puri's initiated disciple, but because of his arrogance was bereft of his guru's grace. Krishnadas Kaviraj has described the incident with great beauty in the Chaitanya Charitamrita (1.8.16-30) as follows:

Previously, when Madhavendra Puri was on his deathbed, Ramachandra Puri came to see him. Madhavendra Puri was singing the names of the Lord and crying out, "I have not attained Mathura!" Ramachandra then began to instruct him--even though he was a disciple, he had no compunction about doing so. He said, "Remember that you are completely full of the bliss of Brahman. Why are you crying like this despite being knowledgeable of your own Brahma-nature?" When Madhavendra Puri heard this, he became angry and began to rebuke Ramachandra, saying, "Get away, get away, you most sinful rascal! I am dying from the distress of not having received Krishna's mercy, of not having attained Mathura, and you come to add to my misery! Don't show your face to me again; go wherever you like! If I see you while I am dying I will take a lower birth. I am dying from the distress of not having attained Krishna and this lowly fool is teaching me about Brahman." As a result, Madhavendra Puri withdrew his blessings from his disciple who thenceforth started to develop material desires. He became a dry philosopher without any interest in Krishna. Not only that but he became critical of everyone, devoting himself to criticism.

Isvara Puri, on the other hand, served the great man, personally cleaning his urine and feces. He continuously repeated the name of Krishna so that he could hear him, and recounted Krishna's pastimes. Madhavendra Puri was so pleased with him that he embraced and blessed him, saying, "May you have the wealth of love for Krishna!" From that time onward, Isvara Puri became an ocean of love for Krishna, while Ramachandra Puri became a mine of insults. These two personalities thus bear witness to the results of pleasing or displeasing the great soul. Madhavendra Puri taught this truth through them.

In this connection Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Prabhupada has written in his Anubhasya, "Even though Ramachandra Puri saw his own guru suffering of separation from Krishna, he was incapable of recognizing the transcendental nature of this transport of emotions. He judged his guru to be an ordinary man and took his mood to be material, the result of some material insufficiency. As a

result he tried to explain to him the value of experiencing the oneness of Brahman. Madhavendra Puri reacted to his disciple's stupidity and disregard for his instructions and thus stopped wishing for his well-being. He abandoned him and drove him away."

### **Mahaprabhu takes initiation from Isvara Puripada**

Mahaprabhu is the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Even so, he wished to teach that it is absolutely necessary to take a spiritual master. For this reason he played the role of a disciple taking initiation from Isvara Puri when he met him at Gaya. This in itself shows beyond a doubt Isvara Puri's greatness and his importance.

Then the Lord went to Gaya where he met Isvara Puri. After taking initiation from him, he started to display the signs of love of God and when he returned to his homeland, he began to engage in the pastimes of love. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 1.17.8-9)

In the ecstasy of love, the two drenched each other in the tears of prema that fell from their eyes. The Lord said, "My pilgrimage to Gaya has been made successful today, for I have seen your lotus feet. When one makes the piṇḍa offering to the ancestors at a holy place, then that ancestor is delivered. But simply by seeing you, ten million ancestors are delivered from all forms of bondage in a single moment. Therefore no holy place is your equal, and you are the primary source of auspiciousness for even the holy places. Please lift me up from the ocean of material suffering; I offer this body up to your service. The only gift I ask for is that you should give me the nectar of Krishna's lotus feet to drink." (Chaitanya Bhagavat 1.17.49-55)

Mahaprabhu was acting the role of an ordinary mortal, a pilgrim who had come to Gaya to offer the sraddha oblations. On the day that he had performed these rituals, he returned to his room and began to cook. When Isvara Puri came and placed his holy feet in Mahaprabhu's room, Mahaprabhu with great satisfaction personally served him the rice and vegetables that he had himself cooked. In so doing, Mahaprabhu demonstrated most perfectly how to serve the guru.

## **Isvara Puri in Nabadwip**

Isvara Puri had met Mahaprabhu in Nabadwip even prior to giving him the ten-syllable mantra in Gaya. He had also met with Advaita Acharya, who had played the role of a disciple with Madhavendra Puri. This has been described by Vrindavan Das Thakur in the Chaitanya Bhagavata. In the days when Nimai was engaged in his pastimes as a student in Nabadwip, one day Isvara Puri suddenly saw him and was impressed and attracted by his bodily beauty. Nimai invited Isvara Puri to his house to eat and had his mother Sachi cook and serve him Krishna prasada. Then he and Isvara Puri engaged in a discussion about Krishna. At that time, Isvara Puri was staying for a few months at Gopinath Acharya's house. When he saw the renunciation of Gadadhara Pandit, he was pleased and started to affectionately give him lessons from Sri-Kṛṣṇa-līlāmṛta, a book of his own composition. Nimai would also come daily to visit Isvara Puri while he was teaching Gadadhara and offer him his obeisances. One day, Isvara Puripada asked Nimai to correct any mistakes that were in his book. Nimai answered:

“Anyone who finds any fault with a devotee's description of Krishna is a sinner. If a devotee writes a poem, no matter how poorly he does it, it will certainly contain his love for Krishna. A fool says viṣṇaya while a scholar knows the correct form is viṣṇave, but Krishna accepts the sentiment in either case. If anyone sees a fault in this, the fault is his, for Krishna is pleased with anything the pure devotee says. You too describe the Lord with words of love, so what arrogant person would dare criticize anything that you have written?” (Chaitanya Bhagavat 1.11.105-110)

The same incident is described in the Bhakti-ratnakara in the following way:

Look here, this is the house of Gopinath Acharya where Vishvambhara would visit from time to time. Isvara Puri stayed here for a while and composed his book Sri-Krishna-līlāmṛta. He had great affection for Gadadhara Pandit and when he saw the symptoms of love for Krishna in him, he taught him that book. (Bhakti-ratnakara 12.2205-7)

When Nityananda Prabhu was traveling in the west of India, he accidentally met Madhavendra Puri. When the two met, they fainted. Nityananda was overcome by love and started to describe Madhavendra Puri's glories and Madhavendra Puri himself embraced Nityananda and wet him with his tears. Isvara Puripada understood that Nityananda was extremely dear to his spiritual master and so, like his guru's other disciples, held him in great affection and felt a deep love for him.

All glories to Madhava Puri, the ocean of love for Krishna! He was the first shoot of the desire tree of devotion. That first shoot was nourished and grew in the form of Isvara Puri and from him the thick trunk of Chaitanya lila took shape. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 1.9.10-11)

Before he left this world, Isvara Puri sent two of his disciples, Kashisvara and Govinda, to serve Mahaprabhu. Even though these two were Mahaprabhu's godbrothers, he nevertheless obeyed the order of his spiritual master and accepted them as his servants.

## **Sri Ranga Puri**

There Mahaprabhu met Sri Ranga Puri and ended the sufferings of Rama Das. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.1.113)

During his travels through South India, Mahaprabhu came to the town Pandharpur on the banks of the Bhima River. Pandharpur is the home of the Vitthaladeva deity in the Sholapur district of Maharashtra. It is also well-known as the home of the famous Maharashtrian Vaishnava saint Tukarama who lived there in the 15th century of the Saka era.

In Pandharpur, Mahaprabhu was invited by a certain Brahmin to his home where was lavishly fed. While there, he heard that Madhavendra Puri's disciple, Sri Ranga Puri, was staying nearby in another Brahmin's house. Mahaprabhu immediately went there to meet him. He prostrated himself before his guru's

godbrother and was immediately inspired by a mood of ecstatic love. Sri Ranga Puri was also impressed by the sight of Mahaprabhu's ecstatic symptoms and guessed that the Lord must have some relation to the spirit of devotion promulgated by his own spiritual master, without which they would be impossible. He lifted the Lord up and embraced him and the two of them began to cry in devotional ecstasy.

From there Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu went to Pandharpur, where he joyfully saw the temple of Viṭṭhala Thakur. A Brahmin saw the Lord chanting and dancing in ecstatic love, was very much pleased and invited him to his home for lunch. The Brahmin offered Mahaprabhu food with great respect and love. After finishing his lunch, the Lord received auspicious news: Sri Ranga Puri, one of the disciples of Sri Madhavendra Puri, was residing at the home of another Brahmin in Pandharpur. The Lord immediately went to that Brahmin's home and, upon entering, saw Sri Ranga Puri. As soon as Mahaprabhu saw him, he was immediately overwhelmed with ecstatic love and prostrated himself in obeisance. All the symptoms of ecstatic transformation were visible—tears, jubilation, trembling and perspiration. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.9.282-7)

Upon learning that Mahaprabhu was Isvara Puripada's disciple, Sri Ranga Puri was filled with great affection for him. Just by touching each other, they were both flooded with ecstatic feelings. They passed seven days together in discussions of Krishna conscious topics. Sri Ranga Puri was overjoyed to hear that the Lord's birthplace was in Nabadwip. He told the Lord that he had previously been to Nabadwip with his spiritual master and that they had and eaten at Jagannath Mishra's house. He recalled that Jagannath's wife Sachi had fed them a delicious banana flower curry. She had served the sannyasis as though they were her own sons and as if the Mother of the Universe had become incarnate in her. Sri Ranga Puri continued to tell Mahaprabhu that Sachi and Jagannath had a worthy son who took sannyas, taking on the name Shankararanya, but who had died there in Pandharpur.

Upon hearing all this, Mahaprabhu was overcome with feelings of separation and he let Sri Ranga Puri know that Shankararanya had been his very own brother and that Jagannath and Sachi were his father and mother. After they finished their conversation, Sri Ranga Puri went on to Dvaraka while the Lord continued on Krishnavenka River.

Madhavendra Puri is pure devotional sentiment personified. Simply by remembering his name, one can achieve all perfections. All of his disciples such as Isvara Puri and Sri Ranga Puri were similarly intoxicated with the moods of sacred rapture. (Bhakti-ratnakara 5.2272-3)

Some people say that Sri Ranga Puri later came to Jagannath Puri to join the Lord and spend the remainder of his life in his association.

## **Sri Jagannath Mishra**

Jagannath Mishra was born in the village of South Dhaka in Sylhet (Sylhet). His grandfather, Madhu Mishra, had four sons: Upendra, Rangada, Kirtida, and Kirtivasa. His father and mother, Upendra Mishra and Kalavati, had seven sons: Kamsari, Paramananda, Padmanabha, Sarveshvara, Jagannath Mishra, Janardana and Trailokyanath. (Prema-vilasa, 24). According to the Gaura-gaṇoddesa-dipika, Upendra was Krishna's grandfather, the cowherd Parjanya, while Jagannath was Nanda Maharaj in Krishna's Vraja pastimes (Gaura-gaṇoddesa-dipika 37). Nanda or Jagannath were, in Krishna's various appearances, Kashyapa, Dasharath, Sutapa and Vasudeva.

pura yasoda-vrajarajanandau

vṛndavane premarasakarau yau |

saci-Jagannath-purandarabhidhau

babhuvatus tau na ca saṁsayo'tra ||

amu avisatam eva devavaditikasyapau |

srikausalya-dasarathau tatha sriṣṇi-tatpati ||

The king of Vraja has become Chaitanya's father, Jagannath; the queen of Vraja is his mother Sachi. The son of Nanda is Chaitanya Gosai, and Baladeva is his

brother Nityananda. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 1.17.294-295).

## **The birth of Mahaprabhu**

In the Chaitanya Charitamrita, it is also stated that Jagannath Mishra was also known by his title Purandara, which is an epithet of Indra. His wife's name was Sachidevi. Sachi's father was Nilambara Cakravarti. (Chaitanya Charitamrita Adi, 13.59-60)

At first, eight baby girls were born to Jagannath and Sachi, but each of them died at birth. Jagannath then performed a special ceremony to have a son, and not long afterward a boy, Vishvarupa, was born. Vishvarupa is a manifestation of Baladeva and belongs to the same ontological category that is named Sankarshan in the spiritual world. At the age of 12, Vishvarupa took sannyas, adopting the name Shankararanya. He died in the year 1509 in Pandharpur, in the Solapur district of Maharashtra.

Jagannath Mishra and Sachidevi are eternally liberated companions of Krishna; thus, it is clear that their heart and body are made of pure goodness or the suddha-sattva. Another name for pure goodness is vasudeva. Krishna is named Vasudeva because he takes pleasure in the spiritual nature and makes his appearance through pure goodness or vasudeva.

In 1486, at sundown on the full moon day of the month of Phalguna, at the auspicious moment of a lunar eclipse, in the midst of an ecstatic hubbub made by the townspeople filling the sky with the joyful sound of Hari! and Krishna!, the women making their uludhvani, and the gods playing on their divine instruments, Gauranga Mahaprabhu accepted Jagannath Mishra and Sachidevi as his father and mother and appeared in the holy dham of Sri Mayapur. It is said that witches, evil female spirits and other powerful demonic specters cannot go near a neem tree. Out of their feelings of maternal love, Sachi and the other women named him Nimai in order that he be protected from any inauspiciousness. Later, when Nimai took the renounced order of life, he was given the name Sri Krishna Chaitanya. Some of the other names by which he is known are Vishvambhara, Nabadwipa-chandra, Gaurahari, Gauranga and

Mahaprabhu.

When Sachi and Jagannath saw their child's face, they forgot themselves in their excitement. Nilambara Chakravarti was a great astrologer and when he examined the constellations at the baby's birth, he divined that he was to be a king among kings, that he was to possess all virtues, indeed that he was Narayan himself. Jagannath and his entire household were immersed in the ocean of ecstasy upon hearing these predictions. This ocean only increased in fullness as the baby Nimai began to display his childhood pastimes. Whenever Nimai cried, the adults would sing the Holy Names in order to pacify him. When he was only four months old, he started throwing various household articles about, but would only do this until he saw his mother when would lie down and start to cry. Sachi would sing the Holy Names to stop Nimai from crying, and only when he had stopped would she notice the disorder into which the child had put the room. Never suspecting him, she thought that it must be some evil spirit whose efforts to harm the baby had failed due to the protective incantations she was always making over him.

When the time came for Nimai's name-giving ceremony, Nilambara Chakravarti and other learned men in the community called him Vishvambhara, which is thus his principal name, while the women gave him the name Nimai. This latter name was given because neem leaves have a bitter taste and are said to keep death away, and they wished to bless Nimai with a long life. The name-giving ceremony is also the occasion when a child's tastes and tendencies are tested. Jagannath placed rice, puffed rice, gold, silver and a manuscript of the Srimad Bhagavatam before the child, who ignored everything to reach out for the Bhagavatam. All were delighted by Nimai's choice. The philosophers amongst them began to say, "Nimai will be a great scholar." In fact, Nimai wished to show, even at this young age, that the Bhagavatam is the supreme authority in spiritual matters. This is the teaching hidden within this lila.

## **Nimai's childhood**

As Nimai grew, he began to crawl, giving pleasure to his mother and father and all their neighbors. One day, the child saw the god Sesha in the form of a cobra



in the garden. He played with him for a while in the mood of a golden Narayan, and then, like Narayan, he curled up on the coiled snake and fell asleep. When Jagannath Mishra came upon the scene, he feared the worst for the child and started to shout and cry, frightening the beast that slithered away. Nevertheless, Sachi and Jagannath had seen the wondrous form that the child had displayed and became convinced that he was a divine personality.

The neighborhood women found that whenever they loudly chanted the names of the Lord, Nimai would stop crying and start dancing in ecstasy, even rolling about in the dust. So every morning they would surround him and sing the Holy Names. Whether they knew him or not, people would be attracted by his beautiful appearance and would affectionately give him sandesa sweets or bananas. Nimai would take all these sweets and fruits and give them as prasada to the women who sang for him.

When Nimai was able to walk, he would go into the neighbors' houses and take milk and rice, and if he found nothing to eat, he would break various household items. This naughty behavior is a source of delight for his devotees. On one occasion, as Nimai was playing in front of Jagannath Mishra's house, two thieves saw that he was wearing valuable ornaments and became greedy. They charmed the child by offering him a ride on their shoulders and then started to carry him away. However, they were bewildered by Vishnu's illusory power and shortly they found themselves back in front of Nimai's own home. Frightened by this unexpected turn of events, the two rascals ran away. Meanwhile, Jagannath had been searching anxiously for Nimai. When he saw that his child had returned, he held him tightly to his heart and felt as though his life had also been returned to him.

One day, Jagannath Mishra asked Nimai to bring him a book from inside the house. When Nimai ran to fetch it, Sachi was surprised to hear the wondrous jingling of ankle bells. After Nimai had given his father the book and gone off to play, Sachi was amazed to see that his footprints held the auspicious signs of the flag, the lightning bolt, the elephant rod and the banner. Under the influence of their parental love, Jagannath and Sachi were not able to accept that these were Nimai's footprints, but took them rather to be the traces of Damodar, their household Salagrama-sila deity and so they did a special ceremony for him, bathing him, performing the puja and offering food.

On another day, a Brahmin pilgrim passed through Nabadwip with his deity of

the baby Krishna. Jagannath offered him a place to his puja as well as food to cook for an offering. When the pilgrim had finished cooking, he sat down to offer the bhoga to his deity. But as soon as he started meditation on his mantra, Nimai came and began eating the offering. The Brahmin saw this and started to shout in distress. Jagannath Mishra was extremely disturbed by the incident and the Brahmin had to intercede to stop him from giving the child a spanking.

Although the Brahmin did not want to cook again, Jagannath begged him to do so. Before he recommenced preparing the offering, Jagannath took Nimai to a neighbor's house so that he would not do any more mischief. Once again, however, when the Brahmin sat down to meditate on his Bala Gopal mantra to make his offering, Gaura Gopal appeared out of nowhere and started to enjoy the foodstuffs. The Brahmin again began to shout in frustration, "It's been ruined. It's been ruined!" Jagannath was devastated a second time and again wished to punish the child, only to be stopped by his guest. The Brahmin said, "He's only a child and doesn't understand anything. It's not his fault. It seems that it is not my destiny to eat today."

This time, Nimai's older brother Vishvarupa begged the Brahmin to try a third time, and so finally, on his insistence, he began to cook again. This time it was quite late at night and Nimai was fast asleep in his room so no one suspected any trouble. The Brahmin waited until the entire household had gone to bed before making his offering, but once again, contrary to all expectation, Gaura Gopal came to consume it. This time, however, he gave the Brahmin a vision of an astonishing eight-armed form, holding not only the conch, discus, mace and lotus in four of his hands, but a lump of butter from which he was taking pieces and a flute which he was playing with the others. When he saw this wonderful vision, the Brahmin fainted. Mahaprabhu told him not to reveal this lila to anyone. But from then on, the Brahmin remained in Nabadwip and though he engaged in his daily activities as was his wont, would return each evening to Nimai's house to behold his worshipable lord. Nimai told him, "You have been my servant for many, many births. This very same lila also took place at Nanda's house in Gokula."

## **Nimai's education**

Jagannath Mishra completed the three rituals (samskaras) in which the child's ears are pierced, his hair is shorn and his education is begun. It took Nimai only three days to learn the entire alphabet and he started to read and write all of Krishna's names.

The little Gaura Gopal would often ask his parents to bring him birds, even the stars or the moon, and would cry if they could not do so. When they chanted the Holy Names, he would stop crying, otherwise there was no way to quiet him. One day, however, though they repeatedly sang the names of Hari, the child's tears did not stop flowing. When pressed to tell why he was crying so insistently, Nimai said that though it was Ekadasi, he wanted to eat the offerings which the Brahmins Jagadisa and Hiranya had made to their Vishnu deity. Jagannath was astonished to hear this unusual request, but went to the house of his two friends. He told them the whole story, and they were delighted to give him the offering. When Jagannath brought the prasada home and gave it to Nimai, he finally stopped crying.

Nimai continued his naughty behavior and the males in the community reported it to his father while the girls and women would complain to Sachi. Though Jagannath would be angry and want to punish his child, he would be quite astonished to see him completely calm and free from any guilty demeanor. Both his parents wondered, "Who is this child? Has Krishna secretly appeared here as our son?"

Vishvambhara's older brother Vishvarupa had been indifferent to material life since his childhood. After studying at Advaita Acharya's school, or *ṭol*, he came to understand that the ultimate conclusion of the scriptures was devotion to Krishna. When he was twelve years old, his parents started making arrangements for his marriage, he left home and took sannyas, taking the name Shankararanya. This event traumatized Sachi and Jagannath, who were greatly pained by their separation from their oldest son. Jagannath was afraid that Nimai too would become indifferent to family life through studying the scriptures, so he stopped his education. Rather that the boy should remain a fool at home than become a scholar only to leave the household! But after this, Nimai started to misbehave again. One day, he went to a place where used and contaminated pottery was thrown and sat down. When Sachi saw this she became angry and told him several times to leave the dirty spot. Nimai answered her in the spirit of the divine philosopher Dattatreya, "How can a fool tell the difference between that which is pure and that which is not? How can the pots that have been used to

cook for Vishnu possibly be contaminated? What is more, how can any place be impure if I am there? Ideas of purity and impurity from the karma-kaṇḍa have no place in devotion to the Lord. It is just the imagination of people who know nothing but the material world.”

Seeing that the boy would in no way heed her order to leave the unclean spot, Sachi finally dragged him away and made him bathe and herself took a bath. After this she and other members of the community approached Jagannath and entreated him to allow Nimai to resume his studies, which he did.

Some time after this, Nimai’s sacred thread ceremony was held, after which Nimai went out to beg, just as Vamana did. Afterward, Jagannath entrusted him to Ganga Das Pandit, who is none other than the same Sandipani Muni who taught Krishna. Ganga Das Pandit was overjoyed to accept the handsome and virtuous boy Nimai as his student. Nimai would ask him and his fellow students trick questions based on Nyaya and the ensuing arguments would be a source of amazement to everyone.

Jagannath was pleased to see his son take up a disciplined life in which he would bathe daily in the Ganges, perform puja to Vishnu strictly according to the regulations, and offer water to the sacred tulasi plant before finally taking prasad. Nimai would then go to a place where he could be undisturbed and would study alone. Jagannath prayed to Krishna for Nimai’s continued welfare, but at the same time was always afraid that he would come to understand the emptiness of the cycle of saṁsara and eventually leave home. One day, he had a dream in which he saw Mahaprabhu’s beautiful form as a sannyasi, performing sankirtan while surrounded by his devotees, dancing, singing, laughing, crying. After this he came to believe that it was inevitable that Nimai would one day leave home. Sachi Devi tried to convince him that because he had become so attached to his studies, he would never leave home, but she could not convince him. Jagannath disappeared before Nimai became a sannyasi. On the death of his father, Gaurasundara lamented just like Ramachandra did upon hearing of the death of Dasharath, but at the same time consoled his heartbroken mother.

**Srila Jagadisa Pandit**

apare yajna-patnyau sri-jagadisa-hiraṇyakau |

ekadasyaṁ yayor annaṁ prarthayitva'ghasat prabhuḥ ||

The wives of the sacrificing Brahmins in Vraja took birth as Jagadisa and Hiranya. The Lord (Mahaprabhu) asked for and ate their prasada on the Ekadasi day. (Gaura-gaṇoddesa-dipika 192)

asid vraje chandrahaso nartako rasa-kovidah |

so'yam nṛtya-vinodi sri-jagadisakhyah paṇḍitah ||

In Vraja there was a dancer named Candrasasa who was very expert in the tasting of rasa. In Chaitanya-lila, he became Jagadisa Pandit who also took great pleasure in dancing for the Lord. (Gaura-gaṇoddesa-dipika 143)

Jagadisa Pandit is considered to be simultaneously both Nityananda-sakha and Chaitanya-sakha, a branch both of Chaitanya as well as Nityananda in the desire tree of devotion. He was born in the town of Gauhati (Pragjyotishpur) in modern Assam. His father's name was Kamalaksha Bhatta. Both of his parents were devotees of Vishnu. When they died, he came with his wife Duhkhini and his brother Hiranya to Mayapur on the shores of the Ganga where they built a home near that of Jagannath Mishra. Jagadisa Pandit became Jagannath Mishra's very close friend.

Jagadisa and his wife Duhkhini had the same kind of parental affection for the little Nimai as Jagannath and Sachi themselves. Duhkhini was like a mother to Nimai and even sometimes acted as his wet-nurse. Nimai, the son of Sachi, is none other than the son of Yashoda, the supreme lord Krishna incarnate. It is not possible for anyone but an eternal associate of the Lord to have the good fortune to treat him like a son in this way.

### **Nimai begs for Jagadisa's offering**

Mahaprabhu showed through his pastimes just how dear he considered Jagadisa

Pandit to be. Sriman Mahaprabhu is the father of sankirtan and even as a child he tricked everyone into chanting the Holy Names. Sachi and all the other neighbors would clap their hands and sing the names of the Lord in order to make him stop crying. One Ekadasi day, however, Nimai kept on crying despite Sachi Mata and Jagannath Mishra's chanting the Names in the usual way. His parents became confused and anxious, and in desperation asked him, "What do you want, child? What must we give you to make you to stop crying?" Nimai answered, "Today, they have made a rice offering to Vishnu at Jagadisa's house. I want to eat some of that prasada. Give me some of that prasada and I will stop crying."

Jagannath Mishra was amazed to hear Nimai say such things. How could he know that Jagadisa Pandit made a rice offering on Ekadasi? Jagannath Mishra immediately went to his neighbor's house and was surprised to see that a large offering had indeed been made to their Vishnu deity. Jagannath told Jagadisa of Nimai's request, adding that he was worried that it would not be correct for him to eat rice on Ekadasi day. But Gauranga's eternal associate Jagadisa Pandit knew that it was little Gopal in the form of Nimai who was hungry. Without any hesitation, he gave the entire offering to Jagannath Mishra. As soon as Nimai received the plate, he immediately stopped crying and joyfully started to eat.

Jagadisa Pandit and Hiranya [are Chaitanya's branches of the desire tree of devotion]. The merciful Lord gave them his grace when he was a little boy. He ate the offerings to Vishnu at their house on the Ekadasi day. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 1.10.70-71)

Jagadisa Pandit purifies the entire universe because the nectar of love for Krishna pours from him like torrents of rain. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 1.11.30)

The abovementioned pastime is described in the Chaitanya Bhagavat, Adikhanda, chapter 4.

The Lord grabs the things of the devotee even if he doesn't offer them, but he shows no interest whatsoever in the gifts of the non-devotee.

Just as Mahaprabhu was conquered by the devotion of Jagadisa Pandit, so too was his dearest companion Nityananda Prabhu who considered him to be one of his own intimate associates. Nityananda Prabhu was Jagadisa's life and soul. Jagadisa was present in Panihati for the Chira-dadhi Mahotsava.

## **Jagadisa and Jagannath**

Before taking sannyas, Mahaprabhu ordered Jagadisa to go to Nilachala to preach Krishna-bhakti and the religious practice of the age, Harinama-sankirtan. The son of Nanda, Sri Krishna and the son of Jagannath Mishra, Sri Gaurasundara, are the same truth as Jagannath himself. When he arrived in Puri, Jagadisa went for Jagannath's darshan and melted with love when he saw him. When on his way back to Bengal, however, he felt extreme separation from Jagannath. Thousands and thousands of people go on pilgrimage to Puri every single day. All of them take darshan of Jagannath, but how many of them are overcome by feelings of separation when returning home? Perhaps once in a while some fortunate individual is able to feel such emotions. If one truly feels such pangs of separation, then this is a sign of Jagannath's mercy; if not, then one has not truly received the grace of the Lord.

Jagannath Deva saw Jagadisa crying and so mercifully appeared to him in a dream and told him to take his vigraha and serve it. Simultaneously, he appeared to the king of Orissa and ordered him that at the time of the nava-kalevara, when the wooden deity of Jagannath is changed, the outgoing form should be given to Jagadisa Pandit. Thus, when he met Jagadisa, the Maharaj considered it to be a great honor to give him Jagannath's outgoing form, which is known as the samadhi-stha-vigraha.

Jagadisa prayed to Jagannath, asking him just how he could possibly carry the heavy figure of the deity all the way back to Bengal. Jagannath answered him that he would become as light as a cork; Jagadisa should simply cover him with a new cloth and then carry him with the help of a staff. Jagadisa would have to make permanent arrangements to stay wherever Jagannath was set down on the ground. Jagadisa enlisted the aid of two Brahmins, and they took turns carrying Jagannath as far as the village of Jashora on the banks of the Ganges, near the town of Chakdaha. Jagadisa left Jagannath with one of the Brahmins and went to take his bath in the Ganges. Suddenly, the Brahmin found that Jagannath was becoming very heavy and that he was no longer able to hold him up. Thus when Jagadisa came back from his bath, he saw Jagannath sitting on the ground and realized that the Lord wanted to stay in that very spot.

Chakdaha is a historical site and ancient holy place. During the Puranic age, it was known as Rathavarma. Pradyumna killed the demon Sambara there during Krishna's incarnation at the end of the Dvapara age and thus it was known as Pradyumna-nagara. Prior to that, when Bhagiratha was bringing down the Ganga in order to save the Sagara dynasty, he buried the wheel of his chariot here. Thus the town was also given the name Chakradaha, which in time has been transformed into Chakdaha. When the local people heard that the Jagannath deity from Puri had come to stay in Jashora, they flocked there in their thousands to seek his darshan. This is how Jagadisa decided to remain in Jashora rather than return to his home in Mayapur.

Both Nityananda Prabhu and Chaitanya Mahaprabhu visited the Jagannath temple in Jashora on two occasions, being attracted by Jagadisa Pandit and his wife's parental devotion. They held sankirtan and a feast both times. As the Lord was about to leave Jashora to go to Puri, Duhkhini began to cry from the imminent separation so intensely that the Lord agreed to remain behind in the form of the Gaura-Gopal deity. In the course of the couple's householder life, they had a son named Ramabhadra Goswami.

### **The Jashora temple after Jagadisa Pandit**

At first, the deity was kept under a baṭa tree near the Ganges, and later the king of Krishnanagara, Krishnachandra, had a temple built there for him. When the temple became old and dilapidated, Umesh Chandra Majumdar's wife Mokṣhada Devi arranged for repairs to be made. The temple building has no spire, but has been constructed in the manner of an ordinary house. Along with Jagannath, it houses Sri Sri Radhavallabha and Gaura-Gopal. The pole that Jagadisa Pandit used to carry the deity from Puri continues to be kept there. A large amount of land was donated by devotees for the service of the Jagannath deity, but over the course of time, it was all sold off by Jagadisa Pandit's descendants in order to keep the service of the deity alive. No Rathayatra festival is held here, though his Snana-yatra is celebrated with great pomp. On that occasion, the deity is carried from the temple to an altar built in a large field not far from the temple for the purpose of the bathing ritual. A mela or fair is also held in the field, attracting countless people. This Jashora Jagannath Snana-yatra fair is still very well



known. There is also a 500 year-old dais (manca) for Dola-yatra at the site that is used to swing the Radhavallabha on Phalguni purnima.

Siddha Bhagavan Das Babaji of Khalna stayed in Jashora for some time to do his bhajana. There is an annual festival celebrating Jagadisa Pandit's disappearance day on the third day of the waxing moon in the month of Paush (December-January). His appearance day is the twelfth day of the waxing moon in the same month.

Jagadisa Pandit's temple is currently being managed by the Sri Chaitanya Gaudiya Math. How this came to pass was described in the Chaitanya Vani magazine (2.9) in the following way:

"The Supreme Lord is most affectionate to his devotees and is conquered by their love. How many deceptions he engages in just to accept the service of his devotee! Though served in Goloka by hundreds of thousands of goddesses of fortune, Govinda still seems not to have enough people to serve him. It is as though he feels the service is not going on as it should. How many tricks he plays in order to engage the devotee he wants in his service!

Just look at the ploy that Govardhana-dhari Gopal used to engage Madhavendra Puri. His previous pujari had buried him in the jungle on top of Govardhana out of his fear of Muslim marauders. There, Gopal waited patiently until Puripada happened by. He said to him, "I have been waiting impatiently for you for many days, thinking when will Madhavendra come to render me service?" The Lord is playing his cosmic game, and these are all different aspects of his pastimes.

So now, the very same Jagannath deity and Gaura Gopal who were worshiped by Nityananda Prabhu's dear associate, Jagadisa Pandit, have similarly displayed the wonderful pastime of voluntarily offering themselves to the great devotee, Tridandi Swami Srimad Bhakti Dayita Madhava Maharaj, in order to accept his service."

Due to increasing monetary difficulties, three of Jagadisa Pandit's descendants, Vishvanath Goswami, Shambhunath Mukhopadhyaya, Mrityunjaya Mukhopadhyaya, had come to realize that they were no longer able to maintain the day-to-day service of their ancestral deities, nor to undertake the annual festivals, etc. The condition of the temple had also deteriorated and they were

unable to make the necessary repairs. As a result, they decided to take the counsel of Sri Panchu Thakur of Jashora and Santosh Kumar Mallik of Ranaghat, and turn the temple over, without any conditions, to my spiritual master, the founder and acharya of the Chaitanya Gaudiya Math, Om 108 Sri Srimad Bhakti Dayita Madhava Goswami Maharaj. My Guru Maharaj immediately spent a large sum of money on making various repairs and improvements to the temple, adding a new residence building and electric light.

In the first year after taking over Jagannath's service, my Guru Maharaj came to the annual festival and personally sat several thousand men and women in the neighboring field and fed them with maha prasada. I still feel goose bumps when I remember the ecstasy that flooded over Jashora on that day.

## **Srimad Advaita Acharya**

vraje avesarupatvad vyūho yo'pi sadashivaḥ /

sa evadvaita-gosvami caitanyabhinna-vigrahaḥ //

Sadashiva, an expansion of the supreme lord in Vraja, is here known as Advaita Acharya. He is non-different from Chaitanya. (Gaura-gaṇoddesa-dipika 76)

yas ca gopala-dehaḥ san vraje kṛṣṇasya sannidhau /

nanarta sri-siva-tantre bhairavasya vaco yatha //

ekada karttike masi dipa-yatra-mahotsave /

sa-ramaḥ saha-gopalaḥ kṛṣṇo nṛtyati yatnavan //

nirikṣya mad-gurur devo gopa-bhavabhilaṣavan /

priyeṇa nartitum arabdhas cakrabhramaṇa-lilaya //

sri-kṛṣṇasya prasadena dvi-vidho'bhūt sadashivaḥ /

ekas tatra sivaḥ sakṣad anyo gopala-vigrahaḥ //

In Vraja, he took the form of a cowherd boy and danced alongside Krishna. This is stated by Bhairava in the Sivatantra: “Once, during the Divali festival in the month of Karttik, my guru Shankaradeva saw Krishna dancing with Balaram and the cowherd boys. He became desirous of becoming a cowherd boy himself and he began to dance, spinning like a whirling wheel for Krishna’s pleasure.” Thus, by Krishna’s mercy, Sadashiva plays two different roles in Vraja, in one he is Shiva himself, in the other, he is a cowherd boy. (Gaura-gaṇoddesa-dipika 77-80)

## **Advaita-tattva**

In Chaitanya Charitamrita, Krishnadas Kaviraj quotes the following evidence from the diary of Svarupa Damodar to describe the ontological principle of Advaita Acharya:

maha-viṣṇur jagat-karta mayaya yaḥ sṛjaty adaḥ /

tasyavatara evayam advaitacarya isvaraḥ //

advaitam hariṇadvaitad acaryam bhakti-sasanat /

bhaktavataaram isam tam advaitacaryam asraye //

Mahavishnu is the master of the universe, which he creates through his power of Maya. Advaita Acharya is the incarnation of this form of the supreme lord. He is known as Advaita because he is none other than Hari, as Acharya because he is the preceptor of devotion. I take shelter of the supreme lord Advaita Acharya who is the incarnation of a devotee. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 1.1.12-13)

Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur has written, “Maya has two functions, and Maha Vishnu appears in two ways according to those functions. When he is within the material world as creator, he is the universe’s effective cause (nimitta-karaṇa) in his form as Vishnu. In the unmanifest material energy (pradhana), appearing in

the form of Rudra, he has a second identity as Advaita.”

Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur has also written about Advaita Acharya in his Anubhāṣya to Chaitanya Charitamrita 1.6.12: “Lord Advaita Acharya is Maha Vishnu. He is the supreme preceptor. Vishnu’s activities are auspicious because of his existence as the owner or master of the universe. He is the root source of all auspiciousness.... Anyone who cannot understand that the complications which are ever present in the material universe are beneficial in a way which is pure, eternal, complete and free is deprived of his true spiritual activity, devotion to Krishna.”

### **Advaita Acharya was also known as Kamalaksha:**

The well-being of the universe is in Advaita. He is the abode of all auspicious qualities. His activities are the eternal source of welfare for the world, so he was given the name Maṅgala.... Advaita, the abode of virtue, is a portion (aṁsa) of Mahaviṣṇu; his full name is thus Advaita because he is not different from him.... He is the most noble personality in the universe, the spiritual master of the Vaishnavas; he thus has two names which come together as Advaita Acharya. Because in appearance he has eyes like lotus flowers, he also has the name Kamalaksha. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 1.6.12, 26. 30-31)

Vrindavan Das Thakur has also described Advaita as both the foremost of the Vaishnavas and as Shankara:

Residing in Nabadwip is the foremost of the Vaishnava, the most fortunate of all people, Advaita Acharya. He is the chief amongst the gurus in knowledge, devotion and renunciation. He especially teaches devotion to Krishna in the same way that Shankara did. (Chaitanya Bhagavat 1.2.78-9)

### **Advaita’s appearance**

Advaita Acharya appeared in the village of Navagrama near the city of Sylhet as the son of the Varendra Brahmin Kubera Pandit and his wife Nabha Devi, on the seventh day of the waxing moon in the month of Magh. Kubera Pandit is identified in the Gaura-gaṇoddesa-dipika (v. 91) with the original god Kubera, who was Mahadeva's friend and leader of the Guhyakas.

Kubera Pandit, a devotee of Nrsingha, resided in the village of Navagrama near Sylhet in Bangladesh. He was a greatly fortunate follower of the path of devotion; he knew nothing other than the lotus feet of Krishna. His devoted and faithful wife was named Nabha Devi. She is worshipable to the whole world for she is the mother of Advaita Prabhu. (Bhakti-ratnakara 5.2041-3)

On the seventh day of the waxing moon in the month of Magh, the great ocean of joy overflowed. In that auspicious moment, the moon of Advaita descended in the blessed womb of Nabha Devi. In his ecstasy, Kubera Pandit gave in charity to the Brahmins and the poor. He tiptoed to the birthing room and his heart was filled with gladness upon seeing his son's face. All the villagers came running to his house and said to each other, "What pious works did this Brahmin do that in his old age he has been blessed with such a jewel of a son?" The gods rained down flowers without being seen. There is nothing with which this scene can compare. Ghanashyama sings of this great auspicious occasion when a joyous uproar rang around the earth. (Bhakti-ratnakara 12.1759-62)

In the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava Abhidhana, Advaita's birthplace is given as Laura Gram. It is also said there that Advaita Prabhu left Laura to go to live in Sylhet and then from there moved to Shantipur. He also had a home in Nabadwip. His full name was Sri Kamalaksha or Kamala Kanta Vedapanchanana. His birth took place in 1434 AD and he disappeared in the year 1559, at the age of 125 years.

Jahnava Mata's diksha disciple Nityananda Das wrote in his Prema-vilasa that Advaita's birthplace is to be found in Shantipur. He writes that Advaita studied the Veda and other scriptures with the scholar Shantacharya, who lived in the Phullabati section of Shantipur and earned from him the title acharya. Advaita's life has been described in several Bengali books, including Advaita-maṅgala, Advaita-vilasa and Sitacaritra. In the Advaita-vilasa it is written, "The lord remained on this earth for a century and a quarter, performing unlimited pastimes."

## **Advaita Prabhu's travels**

When Kubera Pandit and Nabha Devi disappeared, Advaita went to Gaya on the pretext of performing the appropriate rituals of mourning, and thence continued on a pilgrimage tour of all of India's holy places. When he came to Vrindavan, he became absorbed in the worship of Krishna, but through his meditation he was able to understand that Krishna was about to appear in Nabadwip. While on this pilgrimage tour, he came to Mithila where he met the poet Vidyapati. This encounter is beautifully described in the Advaitavilasa. Advaita Prabhu finally returned from Vrindavan to Shantipur after spending several days in Nabadwip. The people of Shantipur had been suffering from his separation for a long time and were very happy to see him back.

Advaita had two wives; one was named Sri, the other Sita. In the Gaura-gaṇoddesa-dipika, it is written that the divine Yogamaya took the form of Advaita's wife Sita, and that Sri is her prakasa expansion. (Gaura-gaṇoddesa-dipika 86)

Advaita Acharya also had two residences, one in Shantipur, the other not far from Srivasa's home in Nabadwip-Mayapur. His heart was greatly pained at seeing that the people of the world were devoid of any devotion to Vishnu and were as a consequence greatly suffering the pains of material life. Overwhelmed with compassion, he began to teach the Bhagavad-gita and Bhagavat, explaining that the purport of the scriptures was to engage in devotional service to Krishna. At about the same time, Madhavendra Puri had a dream in which Govardhanadhari Gopal commanded him to find sandalwood paste for the deity service. Madhavendra then started out for Puri, taking the road through western Bengal. While there, he stopped at Advaita's house in Shantipur. Advaita became convinced to accept Madhavendra Puri as his guru when he saw his devotional ecstasies, even though he himself is an expansion of the supreme lord. He underwent this ritual in order to demonstrate to the conditioned souls the necessity of accepting a spiritual master.

Madhavendra Puri arrived in the house of Advaita Acharya. When Advaita saw Puripada's prema, he felt a deep inner joy. So, he took care to receive the mantra

from him, after which Madhavendra left to continue his voyage to the south.  
(Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.4.110-1)

It is said that Mahaprabhu is the main trunk of the wish-fulfilling tree of devotion, as well as the gardener who enjoys and distributes the tree's fruits. Though the tree was planted in Nabadwip, it grew in Purushottam Dham (Puri) and Vrindavan, expanding into an entire orchard producing many, many fruits of love. Madhavendra Puri is said to be the first seedling, which eventually grew into this tree. Isvara Puri was the nourished form of this seedling. Mahaprabhu, though himself the gardener, also became the tree's main trunk through his inconceivable energies. Advaita and Nityananda were the two secondary trunks into which the main trunk divided. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 1.9.21)

### **The cause of the Lord's incarnation**

Sri Krishna Chaitanya Mahaprabhu is the main body of the devotional movement, and Advaita and Nityananda are the limbs. All three of them became incarnate, along with Srivasa and other devotees, in order to preach devotion to Hari. All those who were senior to Gauranga appeared on this earth prior to him. Advaita appeared along with the other elderly members of Chaitanya's retinue and when he did so, he observed that the sinfulness of the age of Kali had reached a disturbing limit and that the world was entirely devoid of devotion to Krishna. He thought that a partial incarnation of the lord would not be sufficient to completely bring about the welfare of the earth in this state. He thought, "The world will only benefit if the Supreme Personality of Godhead himself descends to the earth." So he began to worship Krishna's lotus feet with Ganges water and tulasi leaves, shouting and pleading to the lord to become incarnate. With roars of love (prema-huṅkara) Advaita showed his desire for the lord of Goloka to descend to the earth.

He constantly offered water from the Ganges and tulasi manjaris while meditating on Krishna's lotus feet, at the same time calling to Krishna with loud roars. This is the way that he caused Krishna to descend. This, then, is the chief

reason that Krishna Chaitanya became incarnate on this earth. He who is the bridge of justice descends at the wish of the devotee. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 1.3.107-9)

Advaita Acharya dwelt in Shantipur. His body is the reservoir of devotional nectar and is not different from that of Chaitanya. Chaitanya, whose spotless fame has filled the earth, was brought down to this earth by him. My Advaita is not different from Gauranga, and his wife Sita is the mother of the universe. His roars brought Gauranga into this world and then he glorified him everywhere. (Bhakti-ratnakara 12.3753-6)

All glories to Advaita Acharya, the most merciful, whose roars brought about Gauranga's incarnation. Whoever takes shelter of his lotus feet will obtain the great prize of love for Gaura. (Bhakti-ratnakara 12.3761, 3764)

He constantly served Krishna with great enthusiasm, offering Ganges water and tulasi manjaris. Absorbed in thoughts of Krishna, he worshiped him by roaring his name, the sound of which filled the entire universe, reaching up to Vaikuntha. Lord Krishna heard the sound of these roars of love and made himself visible to humanity, for he is controlled by his devotee. (Chaitanya Bhagavat 1.2.81-3)

Prior to Mahaprabhu's appearance, Nityananda Prabhu also descended on the thirteenth day of the waxing moon in the month of Magh, into the family of Harai Pandit and Padmavati in the village of Ekachakra in Rarha, bestowing upon them the opportunity to serve him in the vatsalya-rasa. Meanwhile, eight daughters were born to Jagannath Mishra and Sachi Devi, all of whom died before their son, Vishvarupa, Nityananda Prabhu's other self, took birth. Subsequently, on the full moon evening of the month of Phalgun, the source of all avatars, Gauracandra, made his appearance. After the appearance of Sri Chaitanya, Sita Devi took Advaita's permission to come with gifts to Nabadwip from Shantipur to see the most wonderful child. When she saw him, she blessed him by placing unhusked rice and durva grass on his head.

Advaita Acharya's wife was a respectable and noble woman name Sita Thakurani. Taking permission from her husband, she went to Nabadwip bearing gifts to see the crown jewel of infants. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 1.13.112)

Advaita Acharya established a ṭol for teaching Sanskrit in Nabadwip-Mayapur



and started to engage in a deep study of the scriptures. Every day, Mahaprabhu's older brother Vishvarupa used to go to Advaita's house after bathing in the Ganges to listen to him lecture. On certain occasions, when Advaita was engaged in performing his puja, Vishvarupa would explain to everyone present there that devotion to Krishna was the ultimate purport of all the scriptures. When Advaita heard him speaking in this way, he got up from worshiping his deity and embraced him. Sachi regularly sent little Nimai at lunchtime with something for Vishvarupa to eat. When Advaita Prabhu saw Nimai's beautiful face he became enchanted, but was unable to recognize him as his worshipable lord, the Supreme Truth.

In the meantime, Vishvarupa had secretly decided that he would renounce family life out of a realization that the material world is temporary and that a human being's only real duty is to worship the lord. When he saw that his parents were starting to make wedding plans for him, he quickly left home and took sannyas, after which he was known by the name Shankararanya. Sachi, Jagannath and other devotees all lamented his loss. Advaita too was pained by Vishvarupa's departure, but pacified everyone by saying that Krishna himself would appear soon to eradicate everyone's distress.

After Vishvarupa's abandonment of the hearth, Sachi and Jagannath became afraid that Nimai would follow his example and so they put a stop to his education. Later, however, when they heard Nimai speaking sweetly in the mood of Dattatreya, they decided it would be better to send him back to school. Jagannath Mishra left this world not long after Nimai was given the sacred thread and had become fully absorbed in his studies.

While Mahaprabhu was still fully devoted to his pastimes as a scholar, his marriage to Ballabha's daughter Lakshmipriya was arranged. In those days, Advaita was holding Bhagavat lectures and kirtan at his house in Nabadwip. All the devotees including Advaita were very enthused about the singer Mukunda Datta's voice. On one occasion Isvara Puri came to Advaita's house while on a visit to Nabadwip. From his vigorous appearance, Advaita was able to recognize that he was a Vaishnava sannyasi. Later, Gauranga also met him.

At that time, Isvara Puri arrived in Nabadwip in a most discrete manner. Constantly preoccupied with the taste of Krishna devotion, he was single-minded, dear to Krishna and compassionate. No one was able to recognize him because he was not dressed as a sannyasi, until one day, by chance, he arrived at

Advaita's house. (Chaitanya Bhagavat 1.11.70-72)

## **Advaita tests Mahaprabhu**

When Gauranga returned from Gaya in a changed mood, Advaita, Srivasa and the other devotees were overjoyed. In due course, Nityananda Prabhu arrived in Nabadwip after having toured the sacred pilgrimage sites and there he met Nimai. One day at Srivasa's house, Mahaprabhu indicated that he wanted to perform the Vyasa Puja to Nityananda. On the eve of this puja, Mahaprabhu showed everyone that Nityananda was Baladeva and then, repeating the words, "Nara, Nara", revealed that Advaita had caused him to descend to the earth by calling him.

It is due to Advaita that I have become incarnate, for Nara's roars rang in my ears. I was lying in the Milk Ocean, but Nara's roar woke me up and brought me down here. (Chaitanya Bhagavat 3.9.297-8)

After the Vyasa Puja had come to an end, Mahaprabhu took on the mood of the supreme lord and sent Ramai Pandit, Srivasa Pandit's brother, to fetch Advaita from his house in Shantipur by telling him of the Lord's divine manifestation: "Advaita Prabhu has brought Hari, the Lord of Goloka, to this earth by his cries and by worshiping him with Ganges water and tulasi. Nityananda Prabhu has also made his auspicious appearance in Nabadwip. So Advaita Acharya and his wife should come immediately to Srivasa Angan, bringing all the paraphernalia for worship with him." Ramai immediately carried out Mahaprabhu's order and took his message to Advaita Prabhu.

As soon as Advaita heard that Mahaprabhu had publicly revealed his divine identity, he and Sita Devi immediately set off, bringing their son Achyutananda and some other associates. But rather than going directly to Srivasa's house, Advaita decided to test Mahaprabhu by hiding in Nandanacharya's house. He told Ramai not to tell Mahaprabhu, but the lord, who knows the heart of all, was able to see through Advaita's plan. As Mahaprabhu sat on the altar and revealed his own deity to everyone, Nityananda held the royal parasol while Gadadhara and the other devotees engaged in a variety of services. This time, when

Mahaprabhu sent Ramai to Nandanacharya's house to fetch Advaita, Advaita realized that Mahaprabhu was omniscient and hesitated no longer.

In the company of his wife, he joyfully prostrated himself before the lord, speechless before the manifestation of the lord's divine power. He washed the lord's lotus feet and then worshiped him with the five ingredients (pancopacara), using the following mantra to do so:

namo brahmaṇyadevaya go-brahmaṇa-hitaya ca /

jagad-dhitaya kṛṣṇaya govindaya namo namaḥ //

I pay my obeisances to Krishna Govinda, the lord of the brahminical society, to him who is the source of the cows' and the Brahmins' welfare, and who is the source of the entire universe's well-being.

Mahaprabhu then commanded Advaita Prabhu to get up and dance. Advaita started to dance madly until he was completely intoxicated in a way that astonished all the watching devotees.

### **Krishnadas Kaviraj has written:**

There is one Mahaprabhu or supreme lord, and two other prabhus, or lords. The two other prabhus serve the lotus feet of Mahaprabhu. These three personalities belong to the category of the all-worshipable; the fourth category is the devotee who is the worshiper. Srivasa and the millions of other devotees belong to the category of the pure devotees. Gadadhara Pandit and others are considered to be incarnations of the Lord's energies or shaktis. They are counted as his intimate devotees. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 1.7.94-7)

These are the Pancha Tattva, who include Gauranga Mahaprabhu, the form of a devotee; Nityananda Prabhu, who is the bhakta-Svarupa; and Advaita Acharya, the incarnation of the devotee. These three are considered to be prabhu-tattva or Vishnu-tattva, the category of the lord. Advaita is an incarnation of Mahaviṣṇu, he belongs to the category of Vishnu-tattva, but because he took on the mood of

a devotee so he is called bhaktavatara, the incarnation of a devotee.” Because Gauranga, Nityananda and Advaita all belong to the category of Vishnu-tattva, tulsi leaves are offered to their feet. Without Advaita’s mercy, one can never attain the service of Chaitanya and Nityananda.

daya koro sitapati advaita gosani /

tava kṛpabale pai caitanya-nitai //

Be merciful, Advaita Prabhu, husband of Sita! On the strength of your mercy, I will attain Chaitanya and Nitai. (Narottama Das Thakur)

Advaita Acharya’s glories and his activities have been described extensively in Krishnadas Kaviraj’s Chaitanya Charitamrita, Vrindavan Das’s Chaitanya Bhagavat, Narahari Chakravarti’s Bhakti-ratnakara, as well as in works such as Advaita-vilasa, etc. Those who wish to have a deeper knowledge of his life should consult these books. We can only give an abbreviated biography in this book and such an extensive account cannot be given here. We have only set out to remember the main pastimes Advaita engaged in.

## **Advaita and Hari Das Thakur**

By his pastimes, Advaita Prabhu revealed that a Vaishnava is praiseworthy and worthy of worship, no matter what his family background. Namacharya Hari Das Thakur was born in a Muslim family in Burhan village in the district of Jessore, but later came to live in the village of Phuliya near Shantipur where he would come to associate with Advaita Prabhu. He was staying in a grotto where he was engaged in solitary devotional practices. This was after he had spent time preaching the glories of the Holy Names at the Chandpur house of Raghunatha Das Goswami’s father and uncle, Govardhana and Hiranya Majumdar. Advaita used to invite Hari Das to come to his house in Shantipur to take prasada. This made Hari Das Thakur feel somewhat uneasy. However, Advaita Prabhu, the teacher of the people, claimed that his behavior was in conformity with all the scriptures, for to feed a great devotee like Hari Das is equal to the feeding of millions of Brahmins. In order to demonstrate this, he honored Hari Das by

giving him the plate offered in the sraddha ceremony. On the annual date set aside for offering oblations to the forefathers, a householder Vaishnava offers all kinds of foodstuffs to the Lord and then invites Brahmins and Vaishnavas to take prasad. The mahaprasad is given to the guest of honor and Advaita Prabhu chose Hari Das for this special treatment.

Advaita said, “Please don’t be afraid. I shall only do what is accepted in scripture. If you eat, it is as though ten million Brahmins had eaten.” After saying these words, he gave him the sraddha plate to eat. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.3.219-20)

One of the branches of the Chaitanya tree is Hari Das Thakur, whose activities are amazing. He would unfailingly chant 300,000 names of the lord every day. I only give an indication here of his unlimited virtues; Advaita Acharya honored him by giving him the sraddha plate. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 1.10.43-4)

## **The sons of Advaita**

Although six sons were born to Advaita Acharya, the incarnation of Maha Vishnu, he indicated that some of them had understood the essence of spiritual life and some had not. Those who simply claimed to be his followers but showed no affection for Gauranga were the latter; those who were attached to Mahaprabhu in ever-increasing affection were the former. These included Achyutananda, Sri Krishna Mishra and Gopal Mishra, while Balaram, Svarupa and Jagadisa belonged to the category of those who did not recognize Chaitanya. Achyutananda was the oldest brother and Sri Krishna Mishra and Gopal Mishra followed his lead. The Chaitanya Charitamrita (Cf. 1.12.12) compares the two groups to the wheat and chaff.

Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati also writes in his Gauḍiya-bhaṣya to the Chaitanya Bhagavat (2.10.162), “If someone takes Advaita Acharya to be the best of all the Vaishnavas, then he can be called a Vaishnava. On the other hand, if someone considers him to be the object of all religious life, the viṣaya Krishna, and Sri Krishna Chaitanya Mahaprabhu to be his devotee, or asraya, then he will never be able to attain Krishna’s lotus feet.”

## **The Lord punishes Advaita**

It is also said that Mahaprabhu taught Advaita the real meaning of the Bhagavad-gita.

Vishvambhara explained the true understanding of the Gita to Advaita, he hid the gates which held back the understanding of bhakti. (Chaitanya Bhagavat 2.10.166)

Another wonderful pastime was prepared by Advaita in order to show the fallen jivas how auspicious it is to receive punishment from the lord, or from the guru or a Vaishnava. How fortunate is a devotee who is chastised by his guru! This is described in the seventeenth chapter of the Chaitanya Charitamrita, about which Bhaktivinoda Thakur has made the following comments in his Amṛta-pravaha-bhaṣya: “Advaita Acharya is the godbrother of Mahaprabhu’s guru, Isvara Puri. For this reason, Mahaprabhu treated Advaita as his elder and spiritual master, even though Advaita considered himself to be Mahaprabhu’s servant. Advaita was pained to see Mahaprabhu treat him with such respect and so, in order to seek out the merciful punishment of the lord returned to Shantipur and began to explain the path of knowledge to a few unfortunate individuals. When the Lord caught wind of this, he became extremely angry and went to Shantipur to give him a good thrashing. When he was thrashed in this way, Advaita danced for joy, saying, “Look. My desires have been fulfilled today! Mahaprabhu was previously miserly with me, treating me as his respectful elder. Now he has acted toward me as though I were his servant or disciple, by trying to save me from the heresy of mayavada.” When the lord understood that this had all been a ruse on Advaita’s part, he was embarrassed but pleased with him.

The Lord treated Advaita with the respect deserved by a guru. This caused the Acharya great distress, so he adopted a ruse of teaching the path of knowledge. Mahaprabhu became angry and scorned Advaita, causing him great bliss. When he saw his satisfaction with the turn of events, the Lord became ashamed and was merciful to him. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 1.17.66-8)

"Previously Mahaprabhu would honor me. This made me unhappy, so I thought

that if I start giving lectures on the Yoga-vasiṣṭha, explaining mukti as the supreme goal of life, the lord would become angry and insult me.

## **Sachidevi and Advaita**

Because Advaita Prabhu was very emotional about the condition of the fallen souls, Mahaprabhu could not forgive even his mother when she looked askance at him. On one occasion, through chastising her, he warned all devotees of the danger of offences to the Vaishnavas. If Sachi, who is the essence of motherly affection, the incarnation of Yashoda Devi, cannot be forgiven an offence to the Vaishnava, then what chance do others have? By the same lila, Chaitanya also showed that in order to become free of Vaiṣṇavaparadha, one should beg for forgiveness from the Vaishnava one has offended.

When Vishvarupa came to the conclusion, after studying with Advaita Prabhu, that the world is a temporary place and the only real duty of humankind is to worship the supreme lord, he left home and took sannyas. Sachi Mata, though troubled by his departure, was wary of insulting Advaita for the role he had played in it, knowing him to be a Vaishnava, and took consolation in Nimai's presence at home. But when she saw that Nimai too was going constantly to associate with Advaita, leaving his wife Lakshmipriya alone at home, she began to think that Advaita's name was really unsuitable, that rather than unifying people as it would indicate, he split them apart. ADvaita" would thus be a more appropriate name. "This old gosai goes by the name Advaita, but he should be called Dvaita. One son of mine, as beautiful as the moon, has left home because of him, and he hasn't let me keep the other one settled. No one has mercy on me who am now without anyone in this world. He may be one (advaita) with the world, but I see him as maya (dvaita)." (Chaitanya Bhagavat 2.22.114-6)

Because of her affection for her son, Sachi mentally criticized Advaita in this way and no one knew except for her son, Gaura Hari, who is the indweller of all beings. On the day of the mahaprakasa in the house of Srivasa, when Mahaprabhu was fulfilling the desires of every one of his devotees by allowing them to see his divine form for twenty-one hours, Srivasa asked him whether Sachi Devi could also be blessed with this divine vision. Mahaprabhu answered,

“My mother has committed an offense against Advaita Prabhu, so I will not show her this form.”

When the devotees told Sachi what her son had said, she immediately went to Advaita and begged him for forgiveness. After Advaita had heard Sachi’s confession, he began to glorify her as the one who had carried the supreme lord of all creation in her womb. He continued to do so until he became unconscious from the overwhelming love that he felt. Only when he fell unconscious could Sachi finally take the dust of his lotus feet and thus be free from her offense. Mahaprabhu was satisfied with his mother and showed her his glorious, divine form. Another important lesson we can draw from this story is that Vaishnavas are never proud. Even though she had given birth to Lord Gaurahari, Sachi had no inflated pride as a result. As soon as she became aware of having committed an offense, she immediately went without any hesitation to Advaita and prayed to be pardoned.

### **The Lord comes to Shantipur**

Advaita Acharya was Mahaprabhu’s associate in sankirtan, both in Srivasa’s house and in the streets of Nabadwip and along the shores of the Ganges.

Everyone sang together in great joy, “Krishna Rama Mukunda, Murari, Vanamali!” Holding on to Nityananda and Gadadhara, Advaita, like a lion ran in every direction.(Chaitanya Bhagavat 2.23.29-30)

The lord danced along the banks of the Bhagirathi while all around him all the people sang the names of Hari. Advaita Acharya preceded him, dancing ecstatically with a small group of devotees. (Chaitanya Bhagavat 2.23.202-3)

After Mahaprabhu had taken sannyas from Keshava Bharati in Katwa, he became overwhelmed with love for Krishna and started to run toward Vrindavan. With the help of some cowherd boys, Nityananda Prabhu tricked him into coming to the banks of the Ganges. Nityananda wanted to show him to the people of Nabadwip and wanted to bring him to Shantipur. When Mahaprabhu saw the Ganges, he thought that it was the Yamuna and became ecstatic.



Meanwhile, Advaita had heard that Nityananda had brought Mahaprabhu there and came by boat across the river with new clothes for him. Mahaprabhu was astonished to see Advaita, wondering how he could have known that he was in Vrindavan. Advaita answered by saying that Vrindavan was there wherever Mahaprabhu went and that the western flow of the Ganges was the Yamuna. When he heard these words, Mahaprabhu realized that he had been tricked to coming to the western bank of the Ganges across from the town of Shantipur. Advaita had him take a bath and dressed him in the new cloth and then took him to his house where he stayed for several days.

When Sachi and the people of Nabadwip heard that Gaurahari was at Advaita's they all came there to visit him. Seeing him in his dress as a sannyasi, they were felt joy mixed with separation. Sita Thakurani prepared an immense meal and served it on whole leaves from seed-banana trees. As Mahaprabhu and Nityananda ate, Advaita Prabhu talked and joked with them. This has been extensively described in the Chaitanya Charitamrita's Madhya-lila, chapter 3. Mahaprabhu afterwards also ate foodstuffs prepared by Sachidevi in order to ease the suffering he had imposed on her by his departure. The reunion of devotees turned into a great festival, and Advaita's house in the town of Shantipur was transformed into the city of Vaikuntha.

Everyone was dancing and singing the names of Hari. Advaita's house became the city of Vaikuntha. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.3.156)

### **Advaita goes to Puri on the annual pilgrimage**

When Mahaprabhu was saying his goodbyes to the devotees, he set off to Puri or Nilachala to live there at the behest of his mother. Advaita and the residents of Nabadwip were once again hurled into the ocean of separation from their lord. These events took place in the year 1510. It was probably three more years before the devotees went to Puri during the caturmasya period to visit him there at the time of the Rathayatra.

The first year, Advaita and the other devotees went to Nilachala to see Mahaprabhu's lotus feet. They witnessed the Rathayatra and then stayed for four

months, passing the time in kirtan and dancing in great joy. When the time came for them to depart, the lord told everyone to return every year to see the Rathayatra festival. And so the yearly trips to Puri to see the lord became an institution. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.1.46-49)

Of the last 24 years of Mahaprabhu's life, six were spent in traveling to and from Puri, while he spent the last eighteen there without ever leaving. During the six years that he was traveling, the Bengali devotees would first find out whether he was present in Puri before going. During the eighteen years of Mahaprabhu's permanent stay in Puri, the annual trips became a matter of course.

After Mahaprabhu arrived in Puri, returning from Vrindavan, he never again left in the eighteen remaining years of his life. The devotees came from Bengali every year, meeting with the Lord and staying for the four months of the rainy season. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.1.249-50)

All of Mahaprabhu's servants, Advaita, Nityananda, Mukunda, Srivasa, Vidyanidhi, Vasudeva and Murari, went every year to meet with the lord, staying in Puri for four months. The lord enjoyed a multitude of pastimes with these devotees during this time. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.1.255-6)

The time for Rathayatra came around again and the devotees started off on the annual pilgrimage to Nilachala. They were following the lord's order to come every year to see the Rathayatra festival. With Advaita Acharya at their head, all the devotees set off toward Nilachala. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.8.4-6)

Advaita Acharya would go every year to Puri and stay for the full four months, participating with Mahaprabhu in lilas such as the cleaning of the Gundicha temple, the water sports in Narendrasarovara, Jagannath's Rathayatra, etc. The best of Advaita's three orthodox sons, Achyutananda, who was totally devoted to Gauranga, was also present there, as is attested by the fact that his name is mentioned as the leader of the sixth kirtan group at the Rathayatra, which was from Shantipur. Another of Advaita's sons, Gopal Mishra, is also named in this list. Advaita himself was the principal dancer in the first kirtan group led by Svarupa Damodar.

In the third year, the wives of the Bengal devotees accompanied them, bringing various gifts for Mahaprabhu's service.

Advaita went first to Sachi Mata's house to take her leave. Then he departed with the assembly of devotees. They brought with them all the edibles they knew formerly brought pleasure to the Lord. They performed sankirtan the entire length of the route, purifying everything on their way. All the people of the three worlds were sanctified by the devotees' joyful calls of Hari! Hari! In a mood of ecstasy they all went to see Chaitanya, accompanied by their wives and sons, their male and female servants. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.8.39-43)

In the third year, all the devotees from Bengal decided to go to Nilachala. They went in a group to Advaita Acharya's house, and he happily agreed to go with them to see the lord. That year, all the wives of these saints went also, the mother of Achyuta accompanying Advaita Acharya. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.13.12-13, 21)

Krishnadas Kaviraj has written about a wonderful pastime with Advaita's son Gopal Mishra in the twelfth chapter of Chaitanya Charitamrita's Adi-lila. During the cleaning of the Gundicha temple, Advaita and Mahaprabhu were satisfied to see the deep absorption of Gopal in dancing and singing before them. When Gopal Mishra suddenly fell unconscious, Advaita became very anxious and took his inert body in his lap, chanting the Nrsingha mantra. Despite the various mantras that Advaita uttered, Gopal did not return to consciousness. All the devotees began to cry for him, but Mahaprabhu, who takes away the distress of his devotees, touched Gopal over the heart and said, "Get up, Gopal and chant Hari Hari!" Gopal immediately returned to consciousness and stood up. The devotees shouted the names of the Lord in relief and joy.

## **Kamala Kanta Vishvasa**

Advaita Acharya had a disciple name Kamala Kanta Vishvasa who wrote to King Prataparudra establishing that Advaita was the supreme lord, but then asked him for money for him. When Chaitanya heard about this, he punished Kamala Kanta by refusing him access to the Gambhira. Kamala Kanta was disturbed by this punishment, but Advaita explained to him that to be punished by Mahaprabhu was a cause for rejoicing and that he was most fortunate.

Bhaktivinoda Thakur has made the following comment on this story, which is found in the twelfth chapter of the *Adi-lila*: “Kamala Kanta first proved that Advaita was the supreme lord, but then begged for money from the king on Advaita’s behalf. This action was very displeasing to Chaitanya. Even though the Advaita Acharya is God himself, he is in this world playing the part of a man in order to teach. For an acharya to beg from a king to free himself from debt is considered to be shameless behavior. One should entirely abandon the desire for material and if the desire for material well-being is taken to the point of begging from a foreign king in order to become free of a debt, then one’s spiritual life will certainly go to ruin. Kings are by nature materialistic. If one eats the food of a materialistic person, his mind becomes clouded over. When one’s mind is clouded over, then he can no longer remember Krishna and his life is wasted. Such begging is therefore a prohibited action for everyone, but is especially so for those who are in the position of acharya. It is the acharya’s duty to instruct people in the Holy Names, but he should not take money in return for such instruction. If he does so, he becomes an offender to the Holy Name rather than an initiator in the Name. If an instructor of the Holy Names becomes a money collector, then it is a matter of shame and his religious reputation will be ruined.”

In the third year when the Bengal devotees came with their wives and gifts of various food preparations that were dear to the lord, he mercifully ate all these offerings out of his affection for them. One day, Mahaprabhu was invited to eat at Advaita’s residence. This time, Advaita himself did the cooking and his wife assisted him by cutting the vegetables and gathering the ingredients. It was Advaita’s secret wish to be able to feed Mahaprabhu alone. It so happened that on that day the weather turned bad and due to a storm, all the sannyasis who normally came with Mahaprabhu on such occasions were unable to accompany him. Mahaprabhu thus arrived by himself, to Advaita’s great satisfaction, for he was thus able to serve him the meal in complete privacy. He praised the god Indra as a servant of Krishna who fulfilled the wishes of his devotees. Mahaprabhu was aware of the Advaita’s mood and praised him by saying, “Krishna himself fulfills your desires, so what is unusual about Indra carrying out your orders?” (*Chaitanya Bhagavat* 3.9.60-72)

Mahaprabhu himself glorified Advaita and described the underlying truth of his nature in the following way:

Advaita Acharya is God himself. As a result of his association, I have become purified. Because there is no one equal to him in devotion to Krishna, nor in

knowledge of the scriptures, he is called Advaita Acharya. By his mercy, even the mlecchas become devotees of Krishna, who can describe the extent of his powers or his devotion? (Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.7.17-9)

Mahaprabhu had Rupa and Sanatan Goswamis meet with Advaita and Nityananda in Puri and asked the two prabhus to bless the brothers. Raghunatha Das Goswami received Mahaprabhu's leftovers by the grace of Advaita Prabhu. He was the object of Advaita's affection because his father, Govardhana Mishra, had served him honestly.

His father always rendered service to Advaita Acharya, therefore the acharya was pleased with him. By the grace of the acharya, Raghunatha obtained the lord's leftover plate and was able to have darshan of the lord for five or six days. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.16.225-6)

The words that Mahaprabhu spoke to Advaita when he was about to leave Puri show just how much affection he had for him:

Acharya Gosai came here to show his mercy for me. I am bound in debt to his love and there is no way that I can repay him. He has abandoned his wife, children and home for my sake, traveling a long and difficult way to come here. I am living here in Nilachala without moving. I make no effort on your behalf. I am a monk and I have no wealth--what could I give you to make good my debt? My only possession is my body, which I give you. I will sell it to whomever you wish. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.12.70-74)

## **Advaita's riddle**

When he returned to Nabadwip from Puri, Advaita Acharya met Jagadananda Pandit who had previously been sent there by Mahaprabhu. Advaita was very happy to have his association. When Jagadananda finally asked permission of Advaita Prabhu to return to Nilachala, Advaita gave him a message in the form of a riddle to take back to Mahaprabhu. The riddle was comprehensible to no one but Mahaprabhu himself. The message was as follows:

Tell the Lord that I pay him a million obeisances and that I humbly submit to him the following: Tell the madman that everyone has gone mad. Tell the madman that they are no longer selling rice in the market. Tell the madman that the crazies are no longer good for anything. Tell the madman that this is what the madman said. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.19.19-21)

Bhaktivinoda Thakur explains this riddle in this way: “Tell Mahaprabhu that everyone has become intoxicated with love for Krishna and so in the marketplace of love, no one is buying the rice of Krishna prema any longer. Tell Mahaprabhu that the crazies (aul) are so intoxicated with love that they are no longer involved in their material duties. Tell Mahaprabhu that Advaita said this in a state of complete intoxication of prema. In short, the message was that the purpose for which Mahaprabhu had been called to earth by Advaita had been completed. Now the lord may do as he wills.”

Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya has also written several poems glorifying Advaita: Advaita-dvadasa-nama-stotra, Advaitaṣṭakam and Advaitaṣṭottara-sata-nama-stotra.

Advaita, the avatar of Mahavishnu, appeared in this world on the seventh day of the waxing moon in the month of Magh. This tithi is also known as Advaita-saptami.

## **Srila Namacharya Hari Das Thakur**

ṛcikasya muneḥ putro namna brahma mahatapah |

prahladena samam jato haridasakhyako’pi san ||

murari-gupta-caraṇais caitanya-caritamṛte |

ukto muni-sutaḥ pratas tulasi-patram aharan ||

adhautam abhisaptas tam pitra yavanatam gataḥ |

sa eva haridasa san jataḥ parama-bhaktiman ||

Hari Das Thakur is a combined incarnation of Brahma Mahatapa, the son of Richika Muni and Prahlad. The respected Murari Gupta has written in his Chaitanya Charitamrita that this muni's son picked a tulasi leaf and offered it to Krishna without having washed it first. His father then cursed him to become a mleccha in his next life. He was thus born as Hari Das, a great devotee. (Gaura-gaṇoddesa-dipika 93-95)

### **Hari Das's birth as a Muslim**

In his book Nabadwip-dhama-mahatmya, Bhaktivinoda Thakur has written the following account of how Brahma became Hari Das Thakur:

In the Dvapara Yuga, Nandanandana Sri Krishna was herding the cows through Vraja Dham in the company of his cowherd boyfriends when Brahma decided to test the Lord out of a desire to see his majestic form and opulences. He stole both Krishna's cows and calves, as well as his friends and hid them for a year in the caves of Sumeru Mountain. But a year later, when Brahma returned to Vraja, he was astonished to see that Krishna was still there with both his friends and cattle. Brahma immediately understood his error and began to regret his rash action. He fell down at Krishna's feet and begged him for forgiveness; Krishna responded by mercifully revealing his divine opulence. He who appears in the Dvapara Yuga as Nandanandana Sri Krishna, descends again in the Kali Yuga as Gauranga, taking on the mood and bodily luster of Radharani in order to display the most magnanimous pastimes. Brahma was afraid that he might commit the same offense during Gaura's incarnation so he went to Antardvipa, the central island of Nabadwip, and began to meditate. The Lord was able to understand his mind and so came to him in the form of Gauranga and said, "During my incarnation as Gaura, you will be born in a family of mlecchas and will preach the glories of the Holy Name and bring auspiciousness to all the living beings."

From this above description, it is understood that Hari Das Thakur was an incarnation of the creator god Brahma. It is said that in order to avoid coming under the influence of ahaṁkara, in Gauranga lila, he prayed to Krishna to take birth in a lowly family. The same idea is found in the Advaita-vilasa.

A Vaishnava may appear in any family in any class of society. Mahaprabhu wished to show that even though he may be born in a lowly family, a Vaishnava is the best of all human society. In order to do so, he had his associates be born in a variety of castes. Vrindavan Das Thakur has written the following in Chaitanya Bhagavat:

Hari Das Thakur was born in a low-caste family on the Lord's order in order to show that caste and class have no importance at all. All the scriptures say that a devotee of Vishnu, though born in a lowly family, is still worshipable by all. What will one's caste do for one is born in a high caste but does not worship Krishna? He will go to hell in spite of his high birth. Hari Das took a low birth just to bear witness to these scriptural statements. He is comparable to Prahlad who was born in a family of demons, or Hanuman, who was born a monkey. They belong only superficially to low castes. (Chaitanya Bhagavata 1.16.237-240)

Namacharya Hari Das Thakur appeared in Burhana village. Burhana is currently an administrative region containing 65 blocks (groups of villages) in the Satkhira subdivision of Khulna in Bangla Desh. It is not clear exactly where Burhana village itself lies. Some people hold that Burhana is in West Bengali in the district known as 24 Paraganas, while others think that it is in Jessore district in Bangla Desh. Benapole is the station after Bongaon on the railroad line to Khulna on the Bangla Desh side of the border, so both Benapole and Burhana are currently in Bangla Desh.

According to some people, Hari Das Thakur was born in a Brahmin family. His father's name was Sumati and his mother Gauri. His parents died when he was young, so he went to live with a Muslim couple named Khan in the village of Halimpur about five miles from his birthplace on the other bank of the Salai River. He was thus brought up in an Islamic environment. According to the Advaita-vilasa, however, Hari Das Thakur was born in 1372 of the Saka era (1451 AD) in the month of Agrahayan and his father's name was Khanaulla Kazi. According to this version also, Hari Das was orphaned young.

## **Hari Das's participation in the sankirtan movement**



Since Mahaprabhu was born in 1407 Saka, if we accept the Advaita-vilasa's version, Hari Das was 35 years older than Mahaprabhu. It is known that Nityananda was 12 years older than Mahaprabhu, so there was a difference of 23 years between Hari Das and Nityananda also. Hari Das entered into Mahaprabhu's association when the Lord returned to Nabadwip after having been initiated by Isvara Puri in Gaya. This was when the Lord started preaching the sankirtan movement.

Mahaprabhu engaged in his sankirtan pastimes in Nabadwip while in his kaisora age (i.e., when he was between 10 and 15 years old). From this we can estimate that Hari Das was about 50 years old when he first met Mahaprabhu. By the Lord's wish, Hari Das appeared long before he did. Even before meeting the Lord, Hari Das had already started to reveal the glories of the Holy Names in many wondrous ways. One of the Lord's most important associates in his role as the initiator of the yuga dharma, which is Harinama sankirtan. Vrindavan Das Thakur has described Hari Das's spotless and glorious pastimes extensively in his Chaitanya Bhagavat. Krishnadas Kaviraj Goswami has added some extra information about his life and character.

Hari Das Thakur is a major branch of the desire tree of devotion. His character is extraordinary. He would unfailingly chant 300,000 names of the Lord each day. His virtues are unlimited and I can only give a brief summary here. Advaita Acharya gave him the place of honor at his father's sraddha ceremony. Hari Das Thakur possessed the same qualities as Prahlad, being undisturbed even when being beaten by the Muslims. When he entered the Lord's eternal pastimes, Mahaprabhu took his mortal remains in his arms and danced ecstatically. Vrindavan Das Thakur has described his pastimes extensively, I will simply take up what he has left undescribed. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 1.10.43-47)

It is not known exactly when Hari Das Thakur performed the various lilas which have been described, nevertheless we will try to follow a chronological order as far as possible. In the Adikhaṇḍa of the Chaitanya Bhagavat, Vrindavan Das Thakur writes about Mahaprabhu's life from his birth until his return from Gaya. The Madhya-khaṇḍa describes the Lord after his return from Gaya, his ecstatic transformations in separation from Krishna, his Krishna conscious instructions to his students, his beginning the sankirtan movement with his students, his kirtan pastimes in the houses of Chandrasekhara and Srivasa Pandit, etc., up until he took sannyas. Hari Das Thakur is mentioned in the Madhya-khaṇḍa in connection with the Lord's sankirtan pastimes:

In the Madhya-khaṇḍa, the Lord falls in to the Ganges in great distress; Nityananda and Hari Das pull him out of the water. (Chaitanya Bhagavat 1.1.149)

Hari Das Thakur was also a participant in the sankirtan festivities in the houses of Chandrasekhara and Srivasa Pandit.

When the Vaishnavas heard that the Lord had begun his sankirtan pastimes, they all were overjoyed. Every night he would hold kirtan in the house of Srivasa Pandit, sometimes at the house of Chandrasekhara Acharya. Nityananda, Gadadhara, Advaita, Srivasa, Vidyanidhi, Murari, Hiranya and Hari Das were all there. (Chaitanya Bhagavat 2.8.110-112)

Hari Das was an eternal associate of the Lord and he incarnated in a Muslim household in order to serve him; from a very early age he showed a proclivity for the chanting of the Holy Names. His life gives a brilliant example of how a devotee who chants constantly without ulterior motivation and without offenses, cannot be swayed from his goal of attaining pure devotional service by any kind of worldly temptation, not even if Maya Devi herself comes to lure him. We summarize what Krishnadas Kaviraj Goswami has written in the third chapter of the Antya-lila of Chaitanya Charitamrita.

### **Temptation by the prostitute Lakshahira**

After Hari Das Thakur had left his home in Buṛhana, he came to the Benapole jungle, which after the pastime about to be described was given the name Hira Veshya's Jungle. Hari Das would have been in his early youth at this time, as it does not seem that Mahaprabhu had yet appeared when these events took place. He was chanting the Holy Name in a secluded part of the jungle, worshipping Tulasi Devi and chanting his three lakhs of Names. He would beg for food at a Brahmin's house. All the people in the area observed his spotless character and his staunch devotion to the Holy Name and gave him their respect.

At that time, an atheistic Vaishnava hater name Ramachandra Khan was a large landowner in the area. He became jealous of Hari Das Thakur's increasing reputation and decided to ruin it by showing a flaw in his character. To this end he devised numerous tactics, none of which were successful. Finally, he called some prostitutes together and asked them to seduce Hari Das. One of these prostitutes, a very beautiful young girl named Lakshahira, promised that she would be able to accomplish the task within three days. Hence, Ramachandra engaged her for this mission.

Ramachandra proposed sending an armed guard with Lakshahira to take Hari Das Thakur prisoner as soon as he had been brought down, but she refused, saying that it would be better to wait until she was sure that Hari Das was ready to fall. That night, she dressed and decorated herself in a most beautiful fashion and went to Hari Das's hut. The first thing she did when she got there was to pay obeisances to the tulasi plant, showing that she was still influenced by her pious Hindu upbringing.

She then went and stood beside Hari Das. She began to use all the wiles at her command, flirting with him by saying, "You are a very handsome man, Thakur. You are in the full bloom of youth; what woman would be able to resist you? I have come here because I am filled with desire for you. If I don't get your touch, I will kill myself."

In answer to this, Hari Das Thakur said, "I have just begun chanting my regular number of Holy Names. As soon as I am finished I will do as you wish. While waiting, please sit down and listen to the sound of the Holy Name." He kept chanting and chanting until morning, when the prostitute became impatient and left. She returned to Ramachandra Khan and told him the whole story.

She returned again that night to Hari Das's hut, and he expressed his regret at having been unable to fulfill her desires due to his inability to complete his quota of Holy Names. Once again, however, he assured her that as soon as he was finished, he would do whatever she wished. Once again, Lakshahira paid her obeisances to Tulasi Devi and sat down and spent the night waiting for Hari Das to finish his chanting. When morning came, she again grew restless. Hari Das said to her, "I have taken a vow that I will chant 10,000,000 Holy Names before the end of the month. I am now almost finished. As a matter of fact, it should be completed this very night. As soon as it is over, I can sleep with you. Do not worry."

On the third night, Lakshahira returned, again paying obeisances to the tulasi bush and sitting down beside Hari Das Thakur to listen to him chant. As she continued to listen to him chanting, the contaminations in her mind began to melt away and she began to regret her mission. She finally fell down at his feet and begged him forgiveness. She told him all about Ramachandra Khan's evil intentions. Hari Das answered her, "I know all about Ramachandra Khan's wicked plans. I would have left on the very first day, but I wanted to show you my mercy so I stayed for three days."

Lakshahira then asked him to instruct her so that she might be saved. He told her that whatever money she had earned by sinful means should be given in charity to the Brahmins and that then she should come and take up residence in his hut where she should chant the Holy Names constantly and worship Tulasi Devi.

Lakshahira did exactly as her guru instructed her, giving all her riches to the Brahmins and shaving her head before returning to the hut dressed in a single cloth. She then started to chant three lakhs of names as Hari Das did. By virtue of her service to Tulasi and her chanting of the Holy Name, she became very renounced, all her senses were conquered and she attained pure love for Krishna. Through Hari Das Thakur's mercy, the prostitute had become a great Vaishnavi.

The prostitute became a celebrated devotee and very advanced in spiritual life. Many stalwart Vaishnavas would come to see her. (C 3.3.141)

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur has commented on Hari Das Thakur's instructions to Lakshahira in the following way: "Even though the guru has a legitimate claim on all of his disciple's worldly possessions, he does not ask for them for his own use. Those who take dakṣiṇa, or alms, are opening the door to the house of Yamaraja. A Vaishnava guru is not such a person bound for the house of Yama; he is a traveler on a higher road. For this reason, there is an arrangement for giving donations of material wealth, etc., to Brahmins on the karma-marga. By not accepting his disciple's possessions, which are after all intended for sense gratification, the Vaishnava guru remains independent of his disciple and does not compromise his integrity. He renounces them because he knows that they will awaken in him a disinterest in the service of the Lord. Hari Das Thakur's teaching here is that the guru's duty is to rid his disciple of his mundane pride and not to himself accept the material possessions which the disciple has renounced." (Anubhāṣya to Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.3.139)

## **The fate of Ramachandra Khan**

A Vaishnava does not take offense from anyone for he does not even consider himself to be a Vaishnava. He accepts all suffering that he undergoes to be the result of his own sinful past and thus does not blame anyone for such suffering. Nevertheless, he is so dear to Krishna that the Lord never tolerates offenses to his feet. The Lord never forgives offenses to the feet of a devotee who is constantly engaged in acts for the benefit of all living beings. As a result, there is no other source of self-destruction and misfortune more powerful than offense to a Vaishnava. The results of such offenses may come immediately or they may be delayed, but they are inevitable.

In the case of Ramachandra Khan, the seeds he had sown in committing these offenses to Hari Das Thakur grew into a great tree, which bore fruit when Nityananda Prabhu came to his house with his associates in his pastimes of saving the fallen souls. As the indwelling soul of all beings, Nityananda was perfectly aware of Ramachandra's record and had in fact come to his house because he was angry and intended to punish him. Though Nityananda Prabhu is known to be the most compassionate, merciful to even the lowliest people, saving sinners like Jagai and Madhai and giving them love of God, he too becomes angry at the offender to the feet of a Vaishnava.

As a result of his offenses to Hari Das Thakur, Ramachandra Khan had become a complete demon and thus was unable to give Nityananda and his companions the proper respect, arranging for living quarters for them in a milkman's cowshed. Nityananda became even more displeased with Ramachandra Khan and left the place. He said, this place is not fit for me, but for a cow-killing meat-eater. Not long after Nityananda Prabhu had left the place, the Muslim tax collector came with his police to collect Khan's overdue taxes. He and his men stayed in the Durga Mandapa at Ramachandra Khan's house and killed a cow there. They took him and his family prisoner and looted the house and village, destroying his caste, his wealth and his family in one fell swoop.

Any town or country in which a great soul is insulted, even if by only one of its inhabitants, is destroyed on account of that offense. (Chaitanya Charitamrita

### **The offenses of Gopal Chakravarti**

Hari Das Thakur left the district of Jessore and came to Hooghly district. He stayed in the village of Chandpur, near Saptagrama-Triveni, at the house of Hiranya and Govardhana Majumdar's family priest, Balaram Acharya. There he stayed in a straw hut and chanted the Holy Names all day long, taking food at Balaram Acharya's house. Raghunatha Das Goswami was a young boy then and he would come to visit Hari Das whose merciful glance made it possible for Raghunatha to later come into Mahaprabhu's direct company.

Hiranya and Govardhana Majumdar would regularly arrange for discussions of the Bhagavat and other scriptures at their house. One day Balaram Acharya brought Hari Das Thakur to this assembly. When he heard about Hari Das Thakur's various qualities and that he chanted three lakhs of names every day, Raghunatha's father Govardhana was very impressed.

While discussing the scriptures, the scholars present brought up the subject of the glories of the Holy Names. One pandit said that the Holy Name destroyed sins, another said that it gave liberation. Hari Das said that the primary fruit of chanting the Holy Name was that it gave love for the lotus feet of Sri Krishna, and the destruction of accumulated sinful karmas and liberation from the material condition were secondary results. He gave the following example: with the first dawn's light, darkness is dissipated and along with it the fear of thieves, ghosts and demons. With the full rising of the sun, one can set about doing one's daily duties. Similarly, even before one has experienced the full manifestation of the Holy Name, one's sins are destroyed and one becomes liberated. With its full manifestation, one attains Krishna prema. The reflection of the Holy Name (namabhāsa) brings liberation, but even if the Lord wants to give liberation to his devotee, the devotee does not accept it.

One of the people who heard Hari Das speak was a Brahmin named Gopal Chakravarti, a handsome and learned young scholar who worked as a tax collector for the Muslim government. When he heard that simply the shadow of

the Holy Name could bring liberation, he got angry and said, “Fellow scholars! These are the statements of a sentimentalist. After millions of births of practicing knowledge one may still not attain liberation, but this fellows says that just a glimpse of the Holy Name will bring that result.”

Hari Das Thakur answered, “The pleasure of liberation is insignificant when compared to the ecstasy of devotion. Just a shadow of devotion, just a shadow of the Holy Name, will easily give one liberation.”

The Brahmin became even angrier and said, “Hari Das must swear that if one is not liberated by namabhasa, then he shall cut off his nose.”

Hari Das Thakur had no trouble agreeing to this, but the rest of the people in the assembly were shocked by Gopal’s breach of the proper etiquette toward a great spiritual personality. Hiranya and Govardhana rebuked the tax collector. Balaram Acharya also chastised him, saying, “You are a foolish logician. What do you know of devotion? You have insulted Hari Das Thakur. Nothing positive will come of that, you will be ruined on account of it.” All the other members of the assembly fell at Hari Das’s feet and asked for forgiveness for Gopal’s behavior, but he only said, “Neither he nor you are at fault. The Brahmin is ignorant and addicted to arguing. One cannot understand the glories of the Holy Name through logic. May the Lord bless you all. Don’t worry about me.” The Majumdars ostracized Gopal Chakravarti, refusing him entry to their house.

Though Hari Das Thakur personally took no offense at Gopal Chakravarti’s words, and even forgave him, Krishna does not take the blasphemy of a devotee lightly and so he punished the Brahmin. Three days later he contracted leprosy and his very prominent nose melted and fell off. Everyone was terrified by the Brahmin’s misfortune and glorified Hari Das Thakur’s spiritual power, but it was a source of distress to Hari Das himself.

## **Hari Das and Advaita Acharya**

Hari Das thus quit the region and moved to Phuliya, near Shantipur, where he came into contact with Advaita Acharya. Advaita was born in 1434, 52 years

before the appearance of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, so he was 17 years senior to Hari Das.

Advaita Prabhu gave Hari Das the sraddha plate that was normally given only to Brahmins. When Hari Das objected to the honor, “If you eat, it is the equivalent of thousands of Brahmins.” Hari Das daily took his midday meal at Advaita Acharya’s house at his invitation. From Krishnadas Kaviraj Goswami’s account, it is apparent that these events took place before Mahaprabhu’s appearance. The primary reason for Mahaprabhu’s incarnation was the devotion and the emotional prayers of both Advaita Acharya and Hari Das Thakur.

[Advaita] began to wonder how the world could be saved. How can this world without devotion for the Supreme Lord ever achieve liberation. He became determined to make Krishna descend and so he began to worship Krishna with Ganges water and tulasi leaves. Meanwhile, Hari Das Thakur was in his grotto chanting the Holy Names and praying for Krishna’s incarnation. Chaitanya Mahaprabhu’s avatar was the result of both these persons’ devotion, by which he saved the world through preaching the chanting of the Holy Names and love of Krishna. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.3.221-4)

A devotee who chants the Holy Name without artifice cannot be swayed from the path of pure devotion, not even by the personification of Maya herself. Once again, Hari Das Thakur is an outstanding example. There was no object of enjoyment in this entire world that could tempt him. If one sees someone who is apparently taking shelter of the Holy Name, but at the same time succumbs to the temptations of women, wealth and power, it can be understood that he is not truly surrendered to the Name. Phalena phalakaraṇam anumiyate: one can guess the cause by examining the results. Although one sees the Holy Names being chanted in many places, but one does not often see the desired results. The reason is that those who are doing the chanting are not doing it in a fashion that is sincere, single-minded and offenseless.

### **Maya Devi tries to tempt Hari Das**

While Hari Das Thakur was sitting in his grotto near Shantipur and chanting the



Holy Names with single-minded devotion, Maya Devi herself came to test him. She took on the form of a beautiful woman and called out to him in a sweet voice that would have toppled even great sages, imploring him to embrace her. Once again, Hari Das told her that he would complete his vow of chanting a fixed number of Harinama, and only then he would satisfy her desires. Although she came three nights in a row in this way, Maya Devi was astonished to see that there was not the slightest wavering in his resolve to chant the Holy Name. She admitted defeat and prayed to him for his mercy. Hari Das Thakur gave her initiation in the Maha Mantra and thus Maya Devi disappeared, feeling that she had been fulfilled.

Previously I received the name of Rama from Shiva; but I had the desire to hear the name of Krishna from you. Rama's name is the taraka-nama that gives liberation, whereas Krishna's name is called the paraka-nama because it gives prema. You have made me fortunate by giving me the name of Krishna and I feel a flood of love for him washing over me. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.3.254-6)

### **Hari Das is imprisoned and tortured**

From Srila Vrindavan Das Thakur's Chaitanya Bhagavat, it is known that prior to Hari Das's coming to meet Advaita Prabhu in Shantipur, he lived in Phuliya. Phuliya is on the Eastern Railway line in Nadia district between Ranaghat and Shantipur, about five miles north of Ranaghat. When the Brahmins of the village saw his dedication to the chanting of the Holy Names as well as his ecstatic symptoms of love, they concluded that he was a Vaishnava of the highest order.

The local magistrate (Kazi), however, knowing that Hari Das had been born in a Muslim household, and now was showing such a taste for chanting the Holy Names of Krishna, began to fear that he might convert others to Vaishnavism. He took his complaint to the governor (Nawab), suggesting that Hari Das be punished as soon as possible. The governor ordered his officers to place Hari Das under arrest. The other prisoners already knew Hari Das's glories and thought that the sight and blessings of such a great spiritual personality would surely bring them merit to insure their early release from jail. But Hari Das told them that they were better off in jail and he blessed them that they stay. The

prisoners were naturally unhappy to hear such a statement, but then Hari Das explained his strange blessing:

I don't mean to say that you should remain prisoners, but that you forget sense gratification and that you chant Hare Krishna. This was the meaning of my blessing; please don't be sad for a moment on that account. (Chaitanya Bhagavat 1.16.63-64)

While in jail, the prisoners could forget the entanglements of material life and simply concentrate on chanting the Holy Name.

One day, the Nawab asked Hari Das why he had abandoned the pure religion of Islam to embrace Hinduism. Hari Das Thakur answered, "God is one. The same God is present in every religion; He is the non-dual absolute truth. In the different religions, it is simply the name that differs, but on the absolute plane, there is no distinction to be made. The same God sits in the heart of every single living being and he engages each one of them in His service in different ways. One worships in the way one is made to worship by Him. There are Hindu Brahmins who convert to Islam. In the same way, though I was born in a Muslim family, I have been engaged by the Lord in chanting the Holy Names of Krishna. The living being has no independence in such matters. If this is a fault, then please punish me."

The Nawab rebuked Hari Das, saying, "Chant the names of God as they are found in your own religion and stop practicing other peoples' religion. If you don't, you will have to face a very severe punishment." Hari Das Thakur answered with conviction:

khaṇḍa khaṇḍa han deha jay jadi praṇa

tabu ami vadane na chaṛi hari-nama

"You may cut my body to pieces, and the life may leave it. But I will never abandon the Holy Name which my tongue will ever continue to chant."  
(Chaitanya Bhagavat 16.91)

This statement demonstrated Hari Das's unswerving determination in his worship of the Name. The ordinary living entity is bound up in Maya and so

considers the well-being of the body to be more important than worshipping the Lord. Those who are transcendentalists recognize that the body and its interests are fleeting, and so they put them aside and concentrate on their real self interest, that of the soul, and worship the Lord.

When the Nawab saw that Hari Das Thakur's determination to continue chanting the names of Krishna was unbreakable, he asked the Kazi what should be done. The Kazi answered, "He should be given such a severe punishment that other Muslims will be afraid to convert. He should be flogged publicly in 22 market places until he is dead. If after being beaten in 22 market places he is still alive, then we will know that he really has some kind of spiritual power and that he has been telling the truth!"

The Nawab gave the order and several infantrymen took Hari Das Thakur from marketplace to marketplace, giving him a cruel flogging with a cane in each one. Even so, he did not die. Just like Prahlad, Krishna's mercy protected his body and kept him conscious only of the joys of the Holy Name, and so he did not feel the slightest discomfiture. The pious people of the area who witnessed the merciless beating of Hari Das were greatly distressed. He himself, though being ruthlessly flogged by these sinful people, did not stop praying to the Lord for the well being of his torturers.

"Be merciful to all these poor souls, O Lord! Though they treat me like an enemy, do not consider this to be an offense." (Chaitanya Bhagavat 16.110)

Normally, the type of beating that was being given to Hari Das would have killed an ordinary man after only two or three marketplaces. When his torturers saw that he was still alive after 22 marketplaces, they began to worry. The Kazi would not believe that they had really flogged him if Hari Das remained alive, and he would surely punish them by ordering them to be killed. When Hari Das saw that they were inconvenienced by his remaining alive, he went into a deep trance of meditation on Krishna, appearing to everyone as though dead.

The infantrymen took the body to the Nawab and he ordered it to be buried. But the Kazi objected, saying that because Hari Das had engaged in such reprehensible activities, he should not be buried but thrown in the water. So on the Kazi's order, Hari Das's body was flung into the Ganges. To everyone's surprise, Hari Das floated to the other shore where he climbed onto dry land and started chanting the Holy Names in a loud voice, walking in the direction of

Phuliya. Both the Nawab and the Kazi realized that he was a real saint or pir and they fell to the ground in obeisances and begged him for forgiveness. By his grace, they were able to become free of their evil misdeeds. The Nawab gave Hari Das official permission to go wherever he pleased and to chant the Holy Names.

In the tenth chapter of the Madhya-khaṇḍa, Vrindavan Das Thakur writes that while Hari Das was being cruelly beaten, Mahaprabhu descended with his discus, intending to destroy the demons, but was unable to do so on account of Hari Das's prayers. So he shielded Hari Das's body with his own. Then he revealed to Hari Das the cane marks on his back. The main reason for the Lord's appearance is his devotee. When such an outrage was being perpetrated on his devotee Hari Das, he immediately appeared to protect him.

When Hari Das heard the Lord recount this story, he immediately fainted. The Lord then showed him his divine form. He glorified Hari Das himself: "Anyone who even sees Hari Das becomes free from all bondage. Even great gods like Brahma and Shiva desire Hari Das's company. Even the Ganges desires his touch."

The Brahmins of Phuliya were overjoyed to see Hari Das again. They had been paralyzed by the news that Hari Das was being flogged in all the marketplaces of the district. Hari Das told them that these events had been the result of hearing the blasphemy of Vaishnavas, which in itself is a great offense. Indeed, the punishment that he had received could be considered minimal.

### **Hari Das, the snake and the snake-charmer**

In the grotto at Phuliya where Hari Das did his bhajan lived a poisonous snake. Visitors to Hari Das's place of residence were placed in some discomfort because of the poisonous fumes emanating from this beast. Some local doctors, who were particularly expert in dealing with snakebite, warned Hari Das and advised him to leave his place of worship. At the consistent pleadings of all the people, Hari Das finally agreed to move. However, just before sunset, as he was about to leave, the great serpent left the grotto of its own accord.

Another lesson that can be taken from Hari Das's life is that making a public display of love of Krishna in order to gain public prestige is very detrimental to one's devotional life. One day, a snake charmer from Phuliya village went to a rich man's house to sing Krishna's pastime of taming the serpent Kaliya. Hari Das was present, and when he heard the lilas of Krishna became so affected by love that he fainted in the assembly and the various manifestations of ecstatic love became present on his body. All the people present took the dust of Hari Das's feet and smeared it on their bodies.

A certain Brahmin who was present there saw the respect that the people were showing to Hari Das and became jealous. The shameless fellow had such a strong desire for prestige that when the snake charmer continued his song, he too fell to the ground and began to make a show of all kinds of false ecstasies. The snake charmer could recognize the faker for what he was and started to hit him with a cane. The Brahmin began to scream, "Father! Mother!" and ran away. This particular pastime shows that even a humble snake charmer can possess the simplicity to distinguish between real and faked ecstatic symptoms. He explained to everyone present the naturalness of Hari Das's love and the falseness of the Brahmins pretense.

## **The loud chanting of the Holy Names**

Hari Das Thakur constantly chanted the Holy Name and called to the Lord in a loud voice. At that time, not many people were able to understand the value of this practice. Prior to Gauranga-sundara's appearance, most people were simply interested in sense gratification and were inimical to devotion for Krishna and the chanting of his holy names. Advaita Acharya and Hari Das Thakur were saddened by this terrible situation. When the non-devotees heard them chanting loudly, they would say, "The Lord sleeps during the four months of the rainy season. If you call him out loud in this way, you will wake him up and that will be a grave offense. There will be famine in the country if you keep on with it. Some Brahmins have taken up this chanting business as a way of worshiping their own bellies, no doubt." They would criticize Hari Das and Advaita by joking in this way. Even though such criticism pained Hari Das, he never stopped chanting Hare Krishna in a loud voice.

One day, a Brahmin from a village named Harinadi (in Jessore district) started a debate with Hari Das on this subject. He argued that the names of the Lord should be meditated upon and that there was no reason to chant them aloud. He wanted to know in which scripture it was stated that one should chant aloud. In answer to these questions, Hari Das Thakur gave a detailed account of the glories of the Holy Name. He said that loud chanting of the Holy Names was a hundred times more powerful than japa. Through the loud chanting of the Names, even the birds, animals and other creatures are also saved.

Animals, birds, insects and other creatures are unable to speak, but if they just hear the Holy Name, they can all cross over. If you chant the Holy Names silently, then you yourself will be saved, but if you chant aloud, then you will benefit others. Therefore, all the scriptures state that by the loud chanting of the Name, a hundred times greater result can be obtained. (Chaitanya Bhagavat 1.16.280-2)

japato harinamani sthane sata-guṇādhikaḥ

atmanāṁ ca punaty uccair japan srotāṁ punati ca (Naradiya Puraṇa)

Someone who chants the Holy Names aloud is a hundred times better than one who performs japa, because the one who chanting japa simply benefits himself, while the person who chants japa aloud not only does good for himself, but for all those who hear him as well.

Who is better, the person who earns money and spends it all on himself, or the one who uses his money to support a thousand others? Through japa, one takes care of his own spiritual life, while through ucca-sankirtan, all living beings are benefited. This is the reason for its being considered superior.

Even though he heard Hari Das quote scripture in support of his idea, the Brahmin from Harinadi village was unconvinced. Indeed, he became angry and began to verbally abuse Hari Das by bringing up his low birth. He said, “If everything that you say about the Holy Name is not found in scripture, then I will publicly cut off your nose and ear as a punishment.” As a result of this offensive behavior, the Brahmin contracted smallpox not long afterward and his own nose and ear fell off.

## **Hari Das comes to Nabadwip**

After this, Hari Das Thakur then went to live in Nabadwip out of a desire to be with pure devotees like Advaita Acharya. There he was a participant in the Lord's sankirtan pastimes in the houses of Srivasa Pandit and Chandrasekhara Acharya. Mahaprabhu sent Hari Das and Nityananda Prabhu to go from door to door to beg people to chant the names of Krishna, to worship him and to study the Vaishnava scriptures.

One day, the Lord suddenly had an idea and he called Nityananda and Hari Das to tell them: "Listen, listen, Nityananda. Listen, Hari Das. I wish you to go and communicate my order to everyone. Go to every house and beg people to chant the names of Krishna, worship Krishna, study about Krishna. Other than this, say nothing and make others say nothing. At the end of the day, come here and tell me the results of your preaching. You will beg people in this way, and I will come and destroy those who do not comply with my discus in my hand." (Chaitanya Bhagavat 2.13.7-11)

Nityananda Prabhu and Hari Das Thakur followed the Lord's order and began preaching everywhere in Nabadwip. One day they went up to two feared drunken bandits named Jagai and Madhai, and asked them to chant the Holy Name as the Lord had instructed them. Seeing their fallen condition, Nityananda became merciful toward them, but Jagai and Madhai were in such a state of intoxication that they simply became angry when they heard his appeal, and came forward to beat him and Hari Das up. Nityananda started to run away, but Hari Das being already quite advanced in age (58) was unable to keep up with him. Nevertheless, he somehow managed to escape with his life. Hari Das told Advaita Acharya about the day's events, saying that he would not go out preaching with Nityananda any more, since his behavior was rash and unpredictable. The all-powerful Lord Nityananda's running away is certainly a mysterious pastime, but it is to be remembered that he later went out on his own and managed to deliver the two rascals, Jagai and Madhai.

Hari Das Thakur also engaged in water sports with the Lord in Nabadwip. One day, overcome by a mood of love, the Lord tried to drown himself in the Ganges, and Hari Das and Nityananda jumped in to save him. They hid Mahaprabhu in the house of Nandana Acharya because of his wish for seclusion. When Advaita

Acharya and the other devotees were feeling the distress of separation, they went and brought Srivasa there and reunited the devotees with the Lord.

When Mahaprabhu put on a play about Krishna's Vrindavan pastimes in the house of Chandrasekhara Acharya, Hari Das played the part of the town constable. He came onto the scene, dressed as a policeman, carrying a stick in his hand. The other actors in the play were Mahaprabhu as Adya sakti, Nityananda as an old cowherd woman, Advaita as the clown, Gadadhara Pandit as a cowherd girl, and Srivasa Pandit as Narada Muni. Hari Das's duty in the play was to awaken everyone to the service of Krishna. He cried out, "Wake up! Wake up! Wake up! Srivasa will dance dressed as Narada Muni." (Chaitanya Bhagavat 2.18.100)

When the Lord took his sankirtan party along the banks of the Bhagirathi, Hari Das joined him.

Then Hari Das, the ocean of Krishna-rasa, on Mahaprabhu's order, danced beautifully. (Chaitanya Bhagavat 2.23.204)

The night before Mahaprabhu left to take sannyas, Hari Das was staying at his house. He and all the other devotees were desolated by the Lord's intention to take the renounced order. When the Lord went to Puri. Hari Das went there not long afterwards to see the Rathayatra and never left.

## **Hari Das Thakur in Puri**

When in Puri, though Hari Das was not officially banned from going into the Jagannath temple or the house of Kashi Mishra (where Mahaprabhu was staying), out of humility at his lowly birth, never went there. Rupa and Sanatan Goswamis also demonstrated a similar humility, even though they were born in a very high-caste Brahmin family. They considered themselves to be no better than mlecchas because of their long association with the Muslim court. They would stay with Hari Das when in Puri and not go for darshan of Jagannath or Mahaprabhu. Mahaprabhu himself would go to meet them.



Neither Hari Das, Rupa, nor Sanatan would go to the Jagannath temple. Mahaprabhu would go there to see the Upala-bhoga in the morning. He would then go to the place where they were staying and would visit them there. It was thus the Lord's regular practice to meet whichever one of these three was staying in Puri at the time. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.1.63-65)

During Lord Jagannath's absence from the temple (anavasara-kala), Mahaprabhu would feel separation so intensely that he would go to stay in Alalanath. When he heard that more than 200 devotees had come from Bengal, he returned to Puri to meet them. When he did not see Hari Das Thakur, he inquired after him. Hari Das was there, but paying his obeisances at the side of the highway. The devotees went to Hari Das and told him that Mahaprabhu wanted to see him. Hari Das said,

"I am a low-born person who has no good qualities. I have no right to go near the temple. If I can find a solitary place to stay in some garden somewhere, then I will pass my time there alone. That way there is no danger that the servants of Jagannath will accidentally touch me. This is my wish." (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.11.165-7)

The devotees came back to Mahaprabhu to report what Hari Das had said, and his wish pleased him. He arranged for a house in a solitary garden not far from his own place of worship at Kashi Mishra's house. Kashi Mishra was happy to have the chance to serve the Lord by making these arrangements according to his order. The Lord went to talk to Hari Das and when he saw him paying his dandavats, lifted him from the ground and embraced him. When Hari Das said, "I am an untouchable. Lord, you should not touch me", the Lord answered:

"I touch you just to become purified, for your standard of purification is non-existent in me. At every moment you are bathing in the water of every holy place; at every moment you are performing all sacrifices, penances and charity. You constantly are performing the pious activity of studying the Veda. You are more purifying than any Brahmin or sannyasi."

After saying this, the Lord took him to the flower garden and gave him the solitary room there as a place to stay. "Stay here and chant the Holy Names. I will come every day to visit you here. You can see the discus on the pinnacle of

the temple tower from here. When you see it, pay your obeisances to it. I will arrange for Jagannath's prasada to be brought to you here." (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.11.189-95)

This flower garden is now known by the name, Siddha Bakula. Previously it was named Mudra Math. There is a legend connected with the Siddha Bakula tree. The local pandas have a tradition of giving the twig that is used to clean Jagannath's teeth as prasada to some special person. One day they gave a twig from a bakula tree that had so been used as a gift to Mahaprabhu. The Lord planted this twig in the ground at Hari Das's place of bhajan. This twig eventually grew into a large tree. It is said that the Lord planted the twig on the first day of the month of Chaitra also known as Mahaviṣuva Saṅkranti, i.e. the day when the sun enters into the sign of Aries. For this reason, a festival named the Danta-kaṣṭha-ropana Mahotsava is held on that day every year to celebrate the occasion.

Srila Hari Das Thakur participated in the kirtan during the Rathayatra festival as the main dancer in one of the seven kirtan sampradayas. He was in the third group, which had Mukunda Datta as its lead singer.

### **Hari Das's teachings on the Holy Name**

Mahaprabhu taught the glories of the Holy Name through Hari Das Thakur. One day, the Lord was feeling particularly unhappy about the lot of the conditioned souls. He came to Siddha Bakula and said to the Thakur: "Hari Das, in the age of Kali, the non-Hindus kill the cow and are inimical to the Brahmins. How will these Muslims ever be saved?" Hari Das answered, "Don't be distressed at seeing the pitiable condition of the Muslims. They will be liberated by the namabhasa, the shadow of the Holy Name, whenever they say haram. In the Nrisingha-purana it is said,<sup>1061</sup>The Arabic word haram (haram in Bengal) means anything which is impure according to the Islamic religion. For Bengali Muslims, it particularly refers to the pig or boar which is an untouchable animal in Islam.<sup>1061</sup>

daṁṣṭri-dantahato mleccho harameti punaḥ punaḥ |

uktvapi muktim apnoti kim punaḥ sraddhaya gṛṇan ||

When wounded by the tusks of a boar, the Muslim cries out “Harama, Harama!” again and again. If he attains liberation by so doing, then just think what will be the result if one chants the name of Rama with faith.

Bhaktivinoda Thakur says that if any Muslim dies while saying this word, he is immediately liberated. This is namabhasa or nama-saṅketa because the speaker makes the correct sound but does not intend the Lord Rama. Therefore, it is impossible to say just what fruits await the sincere and faithful chanter. The example is given of Ajamila who called the name of his son Narayan as he was dying, and through this namabhasa he attained liberation.

When he heard this explanation, Mahaprabhu was very pleased, but again he asked Hari Das, “How will the dumb animals and the trees, etc., be delivered?” Hari Das answered:

”You yourself have instituted the loud chanting of the Holy Names which both the moving and non-moving creatures can hear. The mobile creatures are freed from their bondage to repeated birth and death by hearing the names. As for the immobile, they perform kirtan themselves by echoing the sounds. By your indescribable mercy, the entire universe is engaged in kirtan and the mobile and immobile beings dance when they hear it... You preached the loud chanting of the Holy Names by which the repeated births and deaths of all living beings come to an end.” (Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.3.68-71, 75)

## **The disappearance of Hari Das Thakur**

Rupa and Sanatan Goswami first met Hari Das when he accompanied Mahaprabhu on his aborted first trip to Vrindavan, when he visited Ramakeli. They thus knew each others’ virtues quite well. One day in Puri, Hari Das recited the glories of Sanatan Goswami, then Sanatan returned the favor by praising him as follows:

”Who else is there who is your equal? You are the most fortunate amongst

Mahaprabhu's entourage. The purpose of the Lord's incarnation is the preaching of the Holy Name; this personal work of the Lord was done through you. Every single day you chant three lakhs of Holy Names and you glorify the Holy Name to everyone you meet. Some people act properly but do not deliver the message of Krishna consciousness, while others preach but do not meet the behavioral standards. You, sir, both demonstrate ideal behavior as well as preaching. You are the guru of all and the perfect human being in this universe." (Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.4.99-103)

In the eleventh chapter of the Chaitanya Charitamrita's Antya-lila, Krishnadas Kaviraj Goswami describes the disappearance of Hari Das Thakur in a most captivating way. It should be read in its entirety on the occasion of Hari Das's disappearance day. A brief summary is given here:

namami hari dasam tam caitanyam tam ca tat-prabhum |

samsthitam api yan-murtim skandhe kṛtvā nanarta yaḥ ||

I offer my obeisances to Hari Das as well as to his worshipable lord, Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, who placed his body on his shoulders and danced.

As Hari Das Thakur grew old, it became more and more difficult for him to maintain his vow of chanting three lakhs of names every day. Thus, he had no appetite when Govinda would come with Jagannath's prasada and only to avoid disrespecting the holy food would he eat a single grain of rice. Out of his affection for Hari Das, Mahaprabhu told him that he was a perfected being and that there was no need for him to show such attachment for devotional service in practice; he could thus reduce the number of Holy Names that he chanted every day. Hari Das then revealed what was really bothering him.

He knew that Mahaprabhu would soon be ending his pastimes in this world and he wished to leave before him. The affectionate Lord granted him his wish, even though he felt desolate at the prospect of losing his company.

Hari Das Thakur sat in front of Mahaprabhu who was standing in front of him. Then, as the tears flowed from his eyes, he gazed at the Lord's lotus face and took his lotus feet on his chest and, while chanting the names "Krishna Chaitanya", voluntarily left his body like Bhishma.

The devotees became intoxicated by the kirtan which grew louder and louder, and the Lord lifted Hari Das's body and started to dance around the courtyard. In the accompaniment of the loud singing of the Holy Names, he and the devotees took Hari Das's remains to the beach. There they washed the body in the sea and then dug a hole in the sand where they placed it. Mahaprabhu was the first to throw sand into the samadhi. This is how the samadhi ritual of Hari Das Thakur was performed. By virtue of his presence, the seashore became a great place of pilgrimage.

Mahaprabhu circumambulated the burial place and then went personally to the Jagannath temple to beg for prasad for a feast in honor of Hari Das. Svarupa Damodar Goswami would not let Mahaprabhu carry the prasad himself, but took care of making all the arrangements himself. At the feast, all the devotees were given enough food to eat to their fill. In a mood of absorption in divine love, Mahaprabhu said to all the devotees:

"All those who witnessed the disappearance festival of Hari Das Thakur, who danced or sang the Holy Names there, who came to throw sand on his samadhi or took maha prasad on this occasion, will quickly attain Krishna. This is the fruit of seeing a great personality like Hari Das Thakur. The Supreme Lord was so merciful that he gave me his association, and now the independent Lord has wished to deprive me of it. When Hari Das decided that he wanted to leave, there was nothing I could do to keep him back. He left his body at the very moment that he desired to do so, just as we have heard that Bhishma did. Hari Das was the exemplar of humanity in this world, and now that he is gone, the world has lost a jewel. All glories to Hari Das Thakur! Chant the Lord's names!" And having finished his eulogy, the Lord began once again to dance. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.11.91-98)

Hari Das Thakur's tirodhana-lila took place on the fourteenth day of the waxing moon in the month of Bhadra.

## **Ganga Das Pandit**

Ganga Das's previous identity

purasid raghunathasya yo vasiṣṭha-munir guruḥ |

sa prakasa-viśeṣeṇa gaṅgadasa-sudarsanau ||

Ramachandra's guru, Vasishtha Muni, appeared in two expansions in Gaura-lila as Ganga Das Pandit and Sudarshana. (Gaura-gaṇoddesa-dipika 53)

acaryaḥ sri-jagannatho gaṅgadasa prabhu-priyaḥ |

asin madhuvane prag yo durvasa gopika-priyaḥ ||

Jagannath Acharya and Ganga Das Pandit were previously Durvasa, who was so dear to the gopis in Madhuvana. (Gaura-gaṇoddesa-dipika 199)

Ganga Das was very dear to Lord Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. Anyone who remembers him will be freed from all material bondage. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 1.10.29)

In his Chaitanya Bhagavat, Vrindavan Das Thakur equates Ganga Das Pandit with Krishna's guru Sandipani Muni:

There was in Nabadwip a wonderful professor named Ganga Das Pandit, who resembled Krishna's guru, Sandipani Muni. (Chaitanya Bhagavat, 1.8.26)

In the Gauḍiya Vaiṣṇava Abhidhana, Hari Das Das suggests that Ramachandra's guru Vasishtha entered into Sandipani Muni during Krishna-lila. Thus, these apparently conflicting statements can be true. In verse 52 of Gaura-gaṇoddesa-dipika, Kavi Karṇapura identifies Keshava Bharati with Sandipani Muni.

Advaita Acharya is Mahaviṣṇu's incarnation. Out of a desire to see the salvation of all creatures in this world, he prayed and called to Krishna to descend to this earth. Indeed, it was through the heartfelt cries of Advaita that Chaitanya Mahaprabhu became incarnate. It was the Lord's desire that all his eternally perfected associates from his previous incarnations who played the role of his seniors descend prior to his own appearance. Ganga Das Pandit was one of these elders who preceded the Lord.

Nityananda Prabhu appeared in the land of Rarha while Ganga Das Pandit, Murari Gupta and Mukunda also appeared elsewhere. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 1.13.61)

Many other associates of the Lord remained hidden in Nabadwip, taken birth there prior to him on his order. They included Chandrasekhara, Jagadisa, Gopinath, Sriman, Murari, Sri Garuda and Ganga Das. (Chaitanya Bhagavat 1.9.98-9)

### **Nimai's vidya-vilasa lila**

Jagannath took little Nimai to Ganga Das when the child expressed his desire to study with him. Ganga Das lived in the neighborhood known as Ganganagara. It is said that when Bhagiratha brought down the Ganges, the goddess waited on this spot for the arrival of Gauranga Mahaprabhu. During the parikrama of Nabadwip Dham, the devotees sit down at a spot near the Yoga Pith temple to hear the glories of Ganga Das's home, even though it is in fact situated in Simantadvipa.

In his commentary to Chaitanya Bhagavat, Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur writes: "Gaura-Narayan is the Lord of Vaikuntha, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. He is therefore the only reservoir of all scriptural knowledge, as well as the embodiment of the opulence of wisdom. Even so, it is his wont to accept human limitations during his incarnation and thus he desired to learn grammar and other arts and sciences just as Krishna did when he studied with Sandipani Muni. He did this to show that those who make a living as teachers should have genuine learning and not make a pretense of possessing knowledge." (Gauḍiya-bhaṣya, 1.8.24)

When Jagannath Mishra brought Nimai to Ganga Das, the scholar was overjoyed to accept him as his student. He began to teach him with as much care as if he were his own son. He was astounded by Nimai's powerful memory and his intelligence. Though he had taught thousands of students, he had never had a

pupil of such caliber. A student of quality brings glory to his teacher.

Nimai would ask trick questions of his fellow students Murari Gupta, Krishnananda, Kamala Kanta and others. He was able to explain a sutra in one way and then in a completely different way, thus baffling his classmates who were nevertheless impressed by his scholarship. Thus, the Lord's education pastimes took place in the home of Ganga Das Pandit.

This is the house of Ganga Das Pandit, where the son of Sakhi studied grammar. Ever day he took delight in this study, even making his own explanatory comments on the codes. With a twinkle in his eye, he would ask tricky questions of Murari Gupta, Krishnananda, Kamala Kanta, and his classmates. Gaurasundara immersed himself completely in the joys of learning -- such pastimes are beyond the ken of the great gods themselves. (Bhakti-ratnakara 12.2185-8)

The Lord studied grammar from Ganga Das Pandit. After hearing a lesson just once he would memorize both the sutra and its explanation. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 1.15.5)

### **Mahaprabhu after his return from Gaya**

After Nimai's return from Gaya in 1509, all the Nabadwip devotees, Srivasa Pandit, Sriman Pandit, Gadadhara Pandit, Sadashiva, and Shuklambara Brahmachari were amazed to see the transformation in his character. They also felt great joy to see how he had abandoned his attachment to his studies to turn to devotion to Krishna and preaching.

Even so, Mahaprabhu continued to set an example of how to serve the spiritual master, going to Ganga Das's house and paying obeisances to his feet. Ganga Das also displayed the suitable behavior of a guru for his dear disciple by embracing him with respect and affection. If one's education does not lead to devotion to Krishna, then it is certainly a waste of time. Through devotion to Krishna, one's ancestors, both on the father and mother's side, are delivered. Ganga Das Pandit was also happy to see Nimai's transformation, but he told him



to continue teaching.

Nimai's guru said, "Your life is blessed, my child. Your mother and father's forefathers have all been delivered. Neither you nor your students should open a book today, even if Brahma himself tells you to do so. You have now revealed yourself, so go home today. Come back tomorrow, however, and continue teaching." (Chaitanya Bhagavat 2.1.122-4)

Nimai paid his obeisances to Ganga Das Pandit's feet, even though he himself has the Lord of the Vedas and the husband of the Goddess of Learning as his disciples. What goals could be left for Ganga Das to achieve? His disciple is worshipable to the fourteen worlds. (Chaitanya Bhagavat 2.1.283-4)

## **Ganga Das at Srivasa Angan**

Nityananda Prabhu, the savior of the most fallen, also visited Ganga Das Pandit's house one day after having been worshiped in Srivasa Pandit's house, when he was wandering through Nabadwip in the mood of a child, playing with the boys of the town.

On the day that Mahaprabhu sat on Vishnu's throne in the house of Srivasa Pandit, displaying his effulgent form for 21 hours in the Mahaprakasa, he called all his devotees one by one to give them his blessings. On this occasion he called Ganga Das as well, reminding him of the following event from the past.

One day, Ganga Das had left his home with his wife and children due to fear of the Muslim rulers. He was standing by the banks of the Ganges with his family, waiting for a ferry to come to take them across the river, but none came. This was causing him no small amount of anxiety, but even after waiting almost the whole night, no ferry docked at the quay. He began to cry in the fear that the Muslims would touch his family members and contaminate them. He thought that he would have to drown himself in the Ganges if this should happen.

At that very moment, Mahaprabhu himself took the form of a ferry man and arrived at the riverbank. Ganga Das was so glad to see him that he said:

Oh brother! Please save me this time. My caste, my life, my wealth and my body are all dependent on you. Help me by taking my family and me across the river. I will give you a silver coin and a pair of new garments. (Chaitanya Bhagavat 2.9.116)

The Lord then took them on board and across the river after which he returned to his abode in Vaikuntha. When Ganga Das heard the Lord recount this event, which only he had known, he fainted in ecstasy.

### **Ganga Das Pandit in Puri**

After the Lord took sannyas at Katwa, Nityananda Prabhu tricked him into going to Shantipur to Advaita's house. Ganga Das came there with the rest of the Nabadwip devotees to see him. He was also one of the first Bengali devotees to go to Puri to see the Lord there. The first time that the devotees went there, the Lord was in Alalanatha due to his feelings of separation from Jagannath, who cannot be seen for a period following the Snana-yatra. The Lord returned to Puri to meet the Bengali devotees. Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya pointed out these devotees to King Prataparudra, naming them one by one, including Ganga Das (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.11.85).

When the Lord met Ganga Das on that occasion, he praised him to the Orissan devotees and embraced him respectfully (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.11.159-60). Ganga Das also participated in the kirtan before the Jagannath cart as a member of the chorus in the second kirtan group. Srivasa Pandit was the lead singer in this group and Nityananda the chief dancer. Hari Das Thakur, Sriman Pandit, Shubhananda, Srirama Pandit were some of the others in the same group (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.13.38-9).

### **Srivasa Pandit**

srivasa-panḍito dhiman yaḥ pura narado muniḥ /  
parvatakyo muni-varo ya asin narada-priyaḥ //  
sri-rama-panḍitaḥ srīman tat-kaniṣṭha-sahodaraḥ /  
namnambika vraje dhatri stanya-datri sthita pura //  
saiveyaṁ malini namni srivasa-grhiṇi mata //

Srivasa is the same Narada who plays such an important part in Krishna's lila. Narada Muni's friend Parvata Muni appeared as Srivasa's younger brother Ramai. Srivasa's wife Malini Devi was Krishna's wet nurse in Vraja, Ambika. (Gaura-gaṇoddesa-dipika 90)

## **The Pancha Tattva**

pancatattvatmakam kṛṣṇam bhaktarupa-Svarupakam /  
bhaktavataṛam bhaktakhyam namami bhaktasaktikam //

I pay obeisances to the Supreme Lord Krishna who has appeared in five aspects: as a devotee, as the expansion of a devotee, as the incarnation of a devotee, as a pure devotee and as the devotional energy.

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur comments: "The supremely potent is revealed in five different manifestations according to his desire to experience five different pastimes. Ontologically there is no difference between them: they are one truth expressed in five varieties. Thus Sri Gauranga, Sri Nityananda, Sri Advaita, Sri Gadadhara and Srivasa and the other devotees, are ontologically non-different from one another. Nevertheless, that one truth is manifest as a devotee (bhakta-rupa), the expansion of a devotee, the incarnation of a devotee, the energy of a devotee and the pure devotee, according to the desire to relish different tastes of divine relationship.

"Of these five truths, the Supreme Lord himself, the son of Nanda, takes on the

devotional mood to become bhakta-rupa. His full expansion (svayaṁ prakāśa), Balaram, takes on the devotional mood and appears as the bhakta-Svarupa, Nityananda. The puruṣavatara Maha Vishnu takes on the devotional mood and appears as the bhaktavatara incarnation of a devotee, Advaita Acharya. These three are all Prabhus, i.e., they are Vishnu-tattva. The devotional energy (bhakta-sakti) and the pure devotee (suddha-bhakta) are classified as energies of Vishnu-tattva, which are considered non-different because of their dependent relationship to it.” The devotional energies are Gadadhara, Svarupa Damodar, Ramananda Raya, etc. The pure devotees include Srivasa and others who are in the moods of friendship or servitude. Srivasa is thus a member of the Pancha Tattva.

### **Srivasa Pandit’s origins**

Srivasa Pandit hailed from Sylhet. He later came to live in Nabadwip where he made an immense contribution to Gaurāṅga lila. From the Chaitanya Bhagavat and Chaitanya Chritamṛta we learn that Srivasa had three brothers in Nabadwip, Srirama Pandit, Sripati Pandit and Srikanta or Srinidhi Pandit. All four were participants in Mahāprabhu’s lila.

Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava Abhidhana cites Prema-vilāsa in saying that Srivasa’s father was a Vedic Brahmin of the name Sri Jaladhara Pandit. Srivasa was the second of five sons. The eldest son was named Sri Nalina Pandit, who had a daughter named Narayani. Narayani’s husband was named Vaikuntha Das Vipra. Narayani’s husband died while she was pregnant with Vrindavan Das, the author of the Chaitanya Bhagavat. She left her husband’s house in Kumarahatta (Halisahar) and came to live with Srivasa in Nabadwip.

### **Srivasa and Nimai Pandit**

During his student life, Nimai would engage Gadadhara and Mukunda and other

devotees in debate, first defeating all their arguments and then showing how they could be proven. The devotees were astonished at his prowess and thought that his learning would bear fruit only if he became a devotee of Krishna. Nimai would pay obeisances to devotees such as Srivasa whenever he saw them, and they in turn would bless him, saying “May you have devotion to Krishna.”

One day Srivasa Pandit was out walking when he encountered Nimai on the street. He said, “People study in order to become devotees of Krishna. What is the use of all their studies if they don’t become devotees? Don’t waste your time. Start worshiping Krishna as soon as possible.”

Mahaprabhu felt great joy upon hearing such words from the mouth of his own devotee and answered, “You are a devotee. By your mercy I will surely have devotion for Krishna some day.” Even though they could not help but be attracted to Nimai, the devotees were unable to recognize him as their own worshipable lord due to the force of his Yogamaya lila-sakti, This is a most astonishing and attractive pastime.

### **Nimai becomes a devotee**

When Mahaprabhu returned from Gaya, he began to display all the symptoms of one who is intoxicated with love of God, but Sachi Mata became terrified, thinking that it was madness. When Srivasa came near him, Mahaprabhu said, “Everyone thinks that I have gone crazy. What do you think has happened to me?” Srivasa laughed and answered, “It’s good that you ask...

If your humors have become disturbed, then I want the same for myself. I see that a great mood of devotion has invaded your body. Krishna has been merciful to you.”

A relieved Mahaprabhu embraced Srivasa and said, “If you too had said that I was going mad, I would have drowned myself in the Ganges.” (Chaitanya Bhagavat 2.2.114-8)

When Mahaprabhu instituted the loud chanting of the holy names in his own

house and in that of Srivasa, all the atheistic neighbors began to complain that they were losing sleep because of the noise. They looked for ways to counter the movement and even started false rumors that the king would come soon to punish the devotees. The impressionable Srivasa Pandit believed these stories and was filled with anxiety. He began to worship Nrisingha Deva for protection.

Understanding that Srivasa was afraid, the lord, who takes away the distress of his devotees, went to his house. He kicked open the door and said, “Who are you worshiping? Who are you meditating on? He whom you are worshiping is standing before you. Look! I will save the righteous and destroy the wicked. You should worry no longer!” So saying, he sat down in the heroic posture (virasana) and revealed the divine form of Nrisingha, holding the conch, discus, club and lotus.

When Srivasa saw this extraordinary manifestation of the lord, he was overcome with feelings of love and began to recite hymns of praise. Mahaprabhu was pleased with Srivasa’s recital and told him to call his wife and family members to see his divine form. He gave his prasada to Narayani and showed his mercy to her by making her utter the Holy Name. Just as the devotee is dear to the lord, the lord is also dear to his devotee.

### **Nityananda’s Vyasa-puja**

When Nityananda and Mahaprabhu met for the first time, Mahaprabhu knew that Nitai had arrived at Nandanacharya’s house and so he went there in the company of the devotees. In order to reveal Nityananda’s glories, he had Srivasa recite a verse from the Bhagavatam (10.21.5):

barhapiḍam naṭavaravapuḥ karṇayoḥ karṇikaram  
vibhradvasaḥ kanakakapisam vaijayantiṁ ca malam |  
randhran veṇor adharasudhaya purayan gopavṛndai-  
rvṛnaranyaṁ svapadaramaṇaṁ pravisaḥ gitakirtiḥ ||

Krishna,  
whose glories are sung to the world by the cowherd boys,  
dressed as a dancing performer,  
a peacock feather decorating his topknot,  
kaṇṇikara flowers behind his ears,  
a golden cloth covering his body,  
and a victory garland around his neck,  
entered Vṛnda's forest,  
the pleasure garden of his auspiciously marked feet,  
while filling the holes of his flute  
with the nectar of his lips.

As soon as Nityananda Prabhu heard the verse, he fainted and the eight ecstatic symptoms appeared on his body. Vishvambhara clasped Nityananda to his bosom. (Chaitanya Bhagavat 2.4)

One day, Mahaprabhu indicated that he wished to perform the Vyasa Puja ceremony for Nityananda, and preparations for it were made at Srivasa's house. On the eve of the ceremony, when the adhivasa kirtan was being sung, Mahaprabhu himself became absorbed by the spirit of Baladeva, thus revealing that Nityananda was Balaram. Then he called out Advaita's name "Naṛa, Naṛa!" (which means "one who makes something move") revealing how he had made him descend by his prayers.

On the following day, as Nityananda started to perform the Vyasa Puja, he placed a garland offering on Mahaprabhu's head. Mahaprabhu immediately gave Nityananda a vision of a six-armed form. Srivasa Pandit, in the role of the ceremony's acharya, had placed the garland in Nityananda's hand and told him to offer it to Vyasadeva while chanting the appropriate mantras, but Nityananda put it on Mahaprabhu's head instead. At the end of the Vyasa Puja, Mahaprabhu

ordered the devotees to engage in kirtan, and as the Holy Names were being sung, he himself asked Srivasa for the prasada which he then personally distributed to all the devotees, as well as to Srivasa's servants. Everyone ate the offerings with great pleasure.

When Mahaprabhu saw Srivasa's devotion to Nityananda, he blessed him that the goddess of fortune would remain forever kind to his household and that even the dogs and cats of his home would have enduring devotion for the lord.

### **Kirtana at Srivasa Angan**

At Mahaprabhu's desire, his sankirtan pastimes began in the house of Srivasa with only his intimate associates being present. This began on an Ekadasi, with Mahaprabhu revealing many transformations of love as soon as the chanting began.

sri hari vasare hari-kirtana vidhana |

nṛtya arambhila prabhu jagatera praṇa ||

pūṇyavanta Srivasaṅgane subharambha |

uṭhila kirtana-dhvani "gopala! govinda!" ||

The scriptural injunction is that one should engage in Harikirtan on Ekadasi evening, also known as Harivasara. On this night, Mahaprabhu, the life of the world, began to dance. This auspicious beginning for the sankirtan movement took place in the pious Srivasa's courtyard, where the singing of Krishna's names Gopal and Govinda rose to the sky. (Chaitanya Bhagavat 2.8.77-8)

Mahaprabhu ordered that the doors should remain closed, and those wicked and hard-hearted persons who were refused entry began to criticize Mahaprabhu and his devotees. Mahaprabhu's followers ignored their insults and continued to ecstatically sing the holy names. Just as the long night of the rasa-lila seemed to the gopis to last only a few moments, the nights of kirtan at Srivasa's house



seemed brief to Mahaprabhu and his followers.

At the end of one such night, Mahaprabhu placed all the Salagrama-silas on his lap and sat down on the altar where he revealed a wonderful form showing his divine nature and accepted all the food offerings given him by his devotees.

On another occasion, Mahaprabhu engaged in his Maha-prakasa-lila, “the pastime of the great epiphany”. On that occasion, he withdrew his devotional mood as well as his divine trances, and openly revealed his divine glories, sitting on Vishnu’s throne for 21 hours. At his signal, the devotees performed the abhishek ceremony reserved for the king of kings according to the scriptural regulations. The devotees made their offerings of flowers and gifts and Mahaprabhu stretched out his feet and accepted them without artifice. He then gave each person present a blessing, fulfilling their personal desires. In the course of this 21-hour (sat prahariya) pastime of the great epiphany (Maha-prakasa-lila), Mahaprabhu appeared in the forms of all the previous avatars. This is recounted in chapter nine of Chaitanya Bhagavat’s Madhya-khaṇḍa.

One evening, Srivasa’s mother-in-law hid in a corner of the courtyard from where she hoped to be able to see the Lord’s sankirtan pastimes. Being the indweller of all beings, the lord was aware of her presence and kept repeating to his companions that on that day he felt no joy in the singing of the Holy Name. This was very disquieting to the devotees who began to suspect that some outsider might be hiding in Srivasa Angan and they made a search. When he found his mother-in-law, Srivasa was mortified and, taking her by the hair, led her out of the courtyard. Only those who have received the mercy of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu have the right to witness his pastimes.

On another occasion, a certain brahmachari who subsisted on milk alone asked Srivasa for permission to see Mahaprabhu’s kirtan. Srivasa knew that he was sattvika in his habits and so he invited him in. Srivasa had the brahmachari hide inside the house, but Mahaprabhu, the indweller of all beings, was well aware of what was taking place. He said, “I don’t know what is wrong with the kirtan today, I am feeling no pleasure. I think that there must be an outsider here somewhere.” Srivasa became afraid and said, “A brahmachari who takes only milk asked if he could watch you dance. He was so eager and I knew him to be austere so I let him in.” Mahaprabhu became angry and answered, “If one doesn’t surrender to Krishna, simply by eating a milk diet and doing other superficial austerities, one cannot attain devotion to Krishna. Make him leave.”

The Brahmin fearfully left the house, but still asked if he could have a partial look at the lord. The most merciful lord called him to his side and placed his lotus feet on his head, telling him not to be proud and make a show of his austere practices.

When Mahaprabhu put on a play about his Vrindavan pastimes at Chandrasekhara's house in Mayapur, Srivasa played the part of Narada Muni. Advaita took on the role of the clown, or viduṣaka and Hari Das Thakur was the police officer. Mahaprabhu himself first played Rukmiṇi and then the Adya sakti, while Nityananda played the part of an old woman. Later, of course, the lord again sat on the altar in the mood of the goddess of fortune, Lakshmi, and later as the mother of the universe, in which mood he gave his devotees his breast to drink from, in a spirit of affection for them.

## **Offenses to Srivasa**

Mahaprabhu's kirtans at Srivasa's house went on every night for a full year, with the doors locked. During this time, many non-devotee Brahmins tried to make fun of Mahaprabhu and his associates. There were several of these pashandis who, because they were unable to see what was going on, were envious and insulted the devotees. One of them was a Bhattacharya Brahmin named Gopal Chapala who decided to destroy Srivasa's reputation by placing a plate of offerings intended for Kali on his doorstep. These included liquor and meat, red hibiscus (jaba phul) flowers, red sandalwood, etc. In the morning, when Srivasa opened the door, he saw these items and started to laugh. He loudly proclaimed, "Look everyone! I am a Shakta. I have been worshiping the Goddess all night long." His better-behaved neighbors were pained to see what had taken place and they removed the offending items and threw them away and then purified the doorstep with cow dung. As a result of this offense to the Vaishnava, Gopal Chapala became afflicted with leprosy. One day, when Mahaprabhu came to the banks of the Ganges to take a bath, Gopal Chapala approached him and prayed to be freed from his disease. Mahaprabhu angrily answered him:

O sinner! Enemy of the devotees! I will not save you. I will have you eaten by worms like this for a million births. You made it seem as though Srivasa had

worshiped Bhavani, so you will dwell in the hell known as Raurava for a million lifetimes. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 1.17.51-2)

When Mahaprabhu took sannyas, he came to Kuliya, the site where offenses are forgiven. Kuliya is the present-day town of Nabadwip, also known as Koladvipa. This time, when Gopal Chapala begged him again to be forgiven, Mahaprabhu was compassionate and told him to ask forgiveness of Srivasa Pandit. One has to ask forgiveness of the very devotee one has offended if one wishes to be freed of the offense. When Srivasa had forgiven Gopal Chapala, he was liberated from the effects of his offense.

The unfortunate Devananda Pandit, though a great instructor in the Srimad Bhagavatam, was devoid of devotion. One day, Srivasa Pandit went to listen to him lecture and, being a great devotee, was deeply affected by the Bhagavata's verses and started to cry in midst of the assembly. Devananda's students, all of whom were pashandis, forcibly dragged Srivasa outside for disturbing the audience. Even though he saw his students acting in this way, Devananda did nothing to stop them. Thus, he too became an offender to the Vaishnava. Mahaprabhu later roundly rebuked Devananda for his inaction on this occasion. Later on, Devananda had the good fortune to come into the association of Vakresvara Pandit who taught him Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's true identity. He thus became sorry for the offense he had committed and received Mahaprabhu's mercy. In Vraja lila, Devananda is Nanda Maharaj's court pandit, Bhandari Muni.

### **The Kazi tries to break up the kirtan**

Mahaprabhu was always amani manada -- he asked for no honors for himself, but always showed respect to others. He would embrace everyone and with great feeling ask them to chant the names of the lord. Then everyone would engage in the loud chanting of the Holy Names with mridanga and conch shells.

Materialistic persons considered them to be nothing other than musicians who were worshipping Mahamaa on the wrong day and would insult them with various blasphemous statements. As they were so doing, one day the local magistrate, the Kazi, was walking by and saw the scene. Hearing the loud noise of the kirtan

he became irritated and angry. He went to Srivasa's house and broke the mridanga and had some of the devotees beaten as a warning. He said, "If anyone does this sankirtan again, he will be punished even more severely." The Kazi then went with some of these malicious townspeople, forbidding the performance of sankirtan. This brought great satisfaction to all the pashandis of the town, and they joyfully continued to mock the devotees.

When Mahaprabhu heard of the incident, he became very angry. He ordered the devotees to take torches and musical instruments and to join him without fear. He separated the devotees into several groups and then led the procession along the banks of the Ganges, himself dancing at its head. Thousands of men, women and children put aside their housework to join him and follow the sankirtan procession. When the miscreants heard the sound of the kirtan, their hearts began to tremble. Meanwhile, when Sirajuddin Chand Kazi heard that thousands of Hindus were coming towards his house, he was frightened and ran to hide inside.

Upon his arrival, Mahaprabhu asked some genteel persons to affectionately inform the Kazi that he was there. When the Kazi heard the polite way in which Mahaprabhu called to him, he was attracted and came outside. He addressed Mahaprabhu as "nephew", since by village relationship he was Nilambara Chakravarti's brother. After a few moments of cordial conversation, the Kazi recounted the following story: "On the night after I broke the mridanga, I had a dream in which I saw a most frightening figure, half-man half-lion, sitting on my chest and threatening to rend it asunder in the way that I had broken the drum. When he saw that I was afraid, he calmed me down and told me that he would forgive me if I promised never to interfere with kirtan again." The Kazi then showed the scratch marks which had been imprinted on his chest by Nrsinghadeva's claws. Chand Kazi then promised that neither he nor anyone from his family would ever stop sankirtan again. He became Mahaprabhu's devotee. The tomb of Chand Kazi is in Baman Pukur, by which there stands a very old Goloka Champa tree. Both Hindus and Muslims offer their respects to the tomb of the Chand Kazi.

### **More kirtan pastimes at Srivasa Angan**

After a night of kirtan at Srivasa's house, when Mahaprabhu returned to external awareness, he would go with all the devotees to bathe in the Ganges. Sometimes the devotees would bathe the lord at Srivasa Angan. One of Srivasa's servant girls named Dukhi would watch Mahaprabhu's ecstatic dancing with tears in her eyes. She also performed the service of filling jugs of water from the Ganges for Mahaprabhu's morning bath. When he saw her devotion, Mahaprabhu was pleased and changed her name from Dukhi ("unhappy") to Sukhi ("happy").

One day, Srivasa's only son died as kirtan was going on in his house. Srivasa was afraid that the sounds of mourning from the women's quarters would disturb Mahaprabhu while he was engaged in singing the Holy Names. So he went directly into the house and tried to quiet the women by explaining spiritual truths to them. When they still didn't stop their loud lamentations, Srivasa threatened to throw himself into the river and drown. This had the desired result. Later on that night, after the kirtan came to a stop, Mahaprabhu said, "Something doesn't seem right. Has a tragic event taken place in the pandit's house?" Srivasa answered, "How can anything be wrong, when I have your smiling face in my home?" But, some of the other devotees said, "Prabhu, Srivasa's only son died in the evening, about an hour after sunset." Mahaprabhu asked, "Why did no one say anything before now?" The devotees answered, "Lord, Srivasa told us not to, because he was afraid that it would interfere with your pleasure from kirtan." Mahaprabhu said, "How could I ever abandon devotees who love me to this extent!" and started to cry.

After this, Mahaprabhu went inside and sat beside the child's dead body and brought him back to life to ask, "Child! Why do you want to leave the house of such a devotee as Srivasa?" The dead child answered, "The few days that I was to spend in Srivasa's house are over, now I am following your wish in going elsewhere. I am a living being who has no independence; I cannot go against your wishes. Please be merciful to me, that I never forget your lotus feet, no matter where I go." When Srivasa's family members heard the child speak such wisdom, they immediately forgot their distress and stopped their mourning. Mahaprabhu said to Srivasa, "From this day on, Nityananda and I are your two sons. We will never leave you."

## **Srivasa's visits to Puri**

After Mahaprabhu had taken sannyas and was living in Puri, Srivasa would come with the other devotees each year to stay with him for the four months of the rainy season.

Advaita, Nityananda, Mukunda Datta, Srivasa, Vidyanidhi, Vasudeva Datta, Murari Gupta and all of Mahaprabhu's other devoted servants met with him in Puri every year and stayed four months. Mahaprabhu engaged in various pastimes in their company. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.9.255-6)

Srivasa was a participant with Mahaprabhu in his lilas of cleaning the Gundicha temple and Rathayatra. He was the principal singer in the second kirtan group or sampradaya, whose chief dancer was Nityananda Prabhu himself. In the first kirtan group, Svarupa Damodar was the lead singer and Advaita Acharya the dancer; in the third, Mukunda Datta sang, while Hari Das Thakur danced. Govinda Ghosh sang in the fourth, with Vakresvara Pandit dancing. The fifth sampradaya came from the village of Kulina, and Ramananda and Satyaraja were its principal dancers. The sixth group was from Shantipur in which Achyutananda danced. The seventh group was composed of the residents of Srikhanda, of whom Narahari and Raghunandan took the lead roles.

When Mahaprabhu wished to dance, the seven groups all came together. On one such occasion, the king Prataparudra was watching Mahaprabhu's wild dancing while leaning on his servant Harichandana's shoulder. In the meantime, Srivasa came and stood in front of Harichandana to watch Mahaprabhu himself. The king's servant kept pushing the deeply absorbed Srivasa, telling him to move so that the king could see. Srivasa became irritated at the repeated disturbance and finally turned around and slapped Harichandana. Harichandana became angry and was about to respond when the king stopped him, telling him how fortunate he was to have been touched by the hand of a devotee such as Srivasa.

One day, Srivasa and the other devotees were glorifying Mahaprabhu's name, form, qualities and activities, with the leadership of Advaita Prabhu. Mahaprabhu became angry and left the scene, but later he accepted defeat and acquiesced to their desire to worship him.

## **Srivasa moves to Kumarahatta**

After Mahaprabhu took sannyas in Katwa, Srivasa and his brothers found it impossible to remain in Nabadwip where everything was full of painful reminders of the lord. They moved to Kumarahatta (Halisahar) near the birthplace of Isvara Puri. Mahaprabhu himself came there on one occasion and took some dust from his guru's birthplace and wrapped it in his cloth. Since that time, devotees have followed his example and taken handfuls of dust from that place with the result that a small pond has formed. It is given the name of Chaitanya's pond, or Chaitanya Doba. When Mahaprabhu went from there to Srivasa's house, all the members of the household joyfully received him and his companions and became absorbed in their service. Mahaprabhu noticed this and said to Srivasa, "You are a householder. You have to earn money in order to maintain your family, otherwise how will you be able to do so?" Srivasa first replied that he had no wish to make money and then clapped his hands three times. Mahaprabhu asked him what he meant by that and Srivasa answered, "I will fast once, twice, three times and then I will tie a jug to my neck and jump in the Ganges." Mahaprabhu responded to Srivasa's statement by giving a roar and saying, "Even if the Goddess of Fortune has to go begging, you will never know want in your home. Lord Krishna himself provides everything that his exclusive devotees need."

Even after Mahaprabhu remained permanently in Puri, it is said that his divine apparitions took place in four places: in Sachi Devi's house, wherever Nityananda was dancing, in Srivasa's kirtan and at the home of Raghava Pandit. These apparitions took place because the Lord is naturally attracted by the love of his devotees. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.2.34-5)

Every year, Srivasa and his brothers would go from Kumarahatta both to Nilachala and to Mayapur to visit Sachi Mata.

Srivasa Pandit's appearance day is the eighth day of the waning moon in the month of Chaitra, and his disappearance day is celebrated on the tenth day of the waning moon in Asharh.

## **Sri Murari Gupta**

murari-gupto hanuman

aṅgadaḥ sri-purandaraḥ /

yaḥ sri-sugriva-namasid

govindananda eva saḥ //

Murari Gupta was Hanuman in Ramachandra's lila; Purandara was Angada and Govindananda Sugriva. (Gaura-gaṇoddesa-dipika 91)

The word gupta means “hidden”, so the name Murari Gupta indicates that Murari (Sri Chaitanya Deva) had secretly taken up permanent residence in his heart. (Chaitanya Bhagavat 2.10.31)

Murari Gupta took birth in a family of Ayurvedic physicians in the district of Sylhet.

Murari Gupta is a physician for the material disease. He was amongst the many associates of Mahaprabhu who appeared in Sylhet. (Chaitanya Bhagavat 1.2.35)

The names of his parents are unknown. He was somewhat older than Mahaprabhu. When his family moved from Sylhet to take up residence in Nabadwip, they lived in the same neighborhood as Sri Chaitanya, so Murari was Nimai's companion in many of his childhood pastimes. It is also written in the Chaitanya Charitamrita that Murari observed Mahaprabhu's childhood pastimes. His name is included in the Chaitanya Bhagavat's list of associates who appeared prior to Mahaprabhu's incarnation.

Hidden in Nabadwip, there were many who had previously taken birth at the Lord's command. They included Sri Chandrasekhara, Jagadisa, Gopinath, Sriman, Murari, Sri Garuḍa and Ganga Das. (Chaitanya Bhagavat 1.2.98-99)

### **Murari's student life in Nabadwip**



Along with Mahaprabhu, he was also a student at Ganga Das Pandit's Tol. When the Lord was engaged in his pastimes of learning and study, he would often engage Murari in joking and mock debate. Murari Gupta was amazed at Mahaprabhu's wonderful intelligence and just the touch of his hand would so immerse him in ecstasy that he was early convinced that he was no ordinary human being.

One day, the Lord was pleased with the explanation which Murari Gupta gave him, one which he was able to give through the Lord's grace. He touched Murari with his hand and his entire body was filled with ecstasy. Murari Gupta thought that this person can in no way be an ordinary human being. Can an ordinary human attain such scholarship so quickly? And his touch brings such ecstatic pleasure! (Chaitanya Bhagavat 1.10.49)

The Vaishnava's ornament is humility. Mahaprabhu would melt when he saw the humility of Murari Gupta.

Murari Gupta, the twenty-first branch of the Chaitanya tree, was a storehouse of love. The Lord's heart would melt when he saw Murari's meekness and humility. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 1.10.49)

### **Mahaprabhu's special mercy to Murari**

When Mahaprabhu returned from Gaya, he saw Murari at the house of Shuklambar Brahmachari. Murari had heard of Mahaprabhu's transformations from Sriman Pandit. Mahaprabhu was pleased with Murari and one day he gave him a vision of his form as the Varaha avatar; the Lord lifted Murari's water jug on his nose as he gave a loud roar. Murari considered his life to have been fulfilled by this vision and he composed a hymn in glorification of the Lord. This event has been beautifully described by Vrindavan Das Thakur in the Chaitanya Bhagavat, Madhya-khaṇḍa, chapter 3.

The Lord took on the mood of Varaha in the house of Murari. The Lord climbed

on his shoulders and danced in the courtyard. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 1.17.19)

Lord Gaurahari had the same kind of affection for Murari Gupta that Lord Ramachandra had for his servant, Hanuman. (Chaitanya Bhagavat 2.3.11) On the occasion of the 21-hour great manifestation (maha-prakasa) at Srivasa Angana, the Lord gave Murari a vision of himself as Ramachandra. When he saw his worshipable deity before him, Murari fainted. Then he glorified the Lord in a way which so pleased him that he gave a benediction to Murari which fulfilled all his desires.

He ordered Murari, “Look at my form”, and lo! Murari saw the form of Raghunatha directly before him. He saw the Lord of the Universe in the swarthy color of durba grass, sitting in the virasana, in the posture of a great bowman. He saw Sita and Lakshman standing on either side of him, and his army of monkeys surrounding him singing hymns of praise. It seemed to him that he was himself one of the monkeys, and as soon as he saw this, he fell down in a faint. The best of the physicians, Murari, lay unconscious on the ground, completely under Mahaprabhu’s spell. (Chaitanya Bhagavat 2.10.7-11)

On one occasion, when Mahaprabhu heard Murari Gupta recite the glories of Ramachandra, he wrote “the servant of Rama” on his forehead. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 1.17.61) On another occasion, Mahaprabhu displayed a four-armed Narayan form in the house of Srivasa, and began calling the name of Garuḍa. Murari Gupta heard the call, and giving a loud roar took the form of the king of birds. Mahaprabhu then climbed on his shoulders. This lila is described in the 20th chapter of the Madhya-khaṇḍa of Chaitanya Bhagavat, and in the 12th wave of Bhakti-ratnakara.

## **Murari and Nityananda Prabhu**

At Srivasa’s house, Mahaprabhu taught the spiritual truths about himself, Nityananda Prabhu and matters of etiquette through Murari. One day, Murari Gupta came to Srivasa’s house. Upon arriving, he first paid obeisances to Mahaprabhu and then to Nityananda. Mahaprabhu said, “This is not correct.” Murari could not understand what he meant. That night when he returned home,

he had a dream in which he saw Nityananda as Balaram, fanning Mahaprabhu/Krishna with a fly whisk. Murari then understood what Mahaprabhu had been telling him and from then on first paid obeisances to Nityananda and afterwards to Mahaprabhu. Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur writes in his Gauḍīya-bhāṣya, “Sri Murari was a worshiper of Balaram. Therefore to worship the Supreme Lord without first worshiping the guru and the jagad-guru is a mistake in sequence.”

The lotus-eyed Mahaprabhu was sitting down with the smiling Nityananda at his right hand side. Murari paid obeisances first to Nityananda and then to the feet of Vishvambhara. (Chaitanya Bhagavat 2.20.22-3)

### **The Lord gives Murari his pan**

Mahaprabhu had great affection for Murari Gupta and so would give him his own pan, which Murari would eat with relish. When Mahaprabhu told Murari to wash his hands, Murari would simply wipe his hands on his head. It was at this time that Mahaprabhu suddenly began to criticize the false views of the Smarta Brahmins and Prakashananda's mayavada.

The Lord said, “O foolish one, you will lose your caste status. My remnants are all over your body.” As he spoke, the Lord went into a trance in which he took on his identity as the Supreme Person. He ground his teeth and started to say something special, “There is a sannyasi named Prakashananda in Kashi who is cutting me into little bits. He teaches the Vedanta, but does not accept my form. I have caused him to become leprous, but still he does not understand. The fool does not realize that the unlimited universes are contained within my body, what arrogance that he should deny it! I tell you the truth Murari, for you are my servant: anyone who does not accept my form is bound for ruin.” (Chaitanya Bhagavat 2.20.31-36)

### **Murari cures the Lord's indigestion**

The Lord is very happy to accept a devotee's offering, no matter how it is made. When Murari returned home, he told his wife that he wished to eat. His devoted wife carefully prepared rice with ghee and gave it to her husband. But Murari, absorbed in contemplation on Krishna, took handful after handful of the food and threw it on the ground, offering it to the Lord in this way. The amazing thing is that even though Mahaprabhu was not physically present there at that time, he accepted the offering. The next day he came to Murari's house and said to him, "I have come to you for medicine. You made me eat so much, insisting that I take and eat. Now I have indigestion. You must give me some water, that will be the remedy for my stomach problem." Mahaprabhu took water from a jug in Murari's house, drinking down its entire contents. Seeing this, Murari fainted and all the devotees began to cry. (Chaitanya Bhagavat 2.20.69-71)

Murari would cure anyone who came to him, whether their disease was of the body or the soul. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 1.10.51)

### **Murari's fear of the Lord's departure**

Murari Gupta analyzed the multiple incarnations of the Lord and came to the conclusion that in each one of the Lord's appearances, before himself leaving, he arranged for his associates to leave also. Thus, Ramachandra destroyed Ravana to save Sita, but then he abandoned her. Krishna arranged for the destruction of the Yadus. Thus, Mahaprabhu too would inevitably be disappearing at a certain moment. He thought that it would be better for him to depart before that day arrived, for it would be too painful for him. For this reason, Murari purchased a sharp knife and kept it hidden in his home. The Lord knew of his intention and immediately came to his house and asked Murari to hand over the knife. Both the abovementioned lilas are found described in the Bhakti-ratnakara's twelfth wave.

Murari Gupta would also go on the annual pilgrimage to see Mahaprabhu in Puri. Accompanied by his wife, he would feed Mahaprabhu many preparations. He would participate in the Rathayatra festival as a member of the third

sankirtan group in which Mukunda Datta sang and Hari Das Thakur danced.

### **Murari's exclusive devotion to Rama**

Mahaprabhu taught the principle of devotion to one's worshipable deity through Murari Gupta. One cannot advance in devotional service without a particular devotion to a worshipable deity, or iṣṭa-devata. Murari was an incarnation of Hanuman, and he saw Chaitanya Mahaprabhu as Ramachandra. On one occasion, Mahaprabhu desired to test his loyalty to his worshipable deity Rama by telling him to worship Krishna. He explained to Murari that Krishna was the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the fountainhead of all the other incarnations. Because he was the ocean of all the devotional flavors, the joy to be had in worshipping Krishna could not be had in the service of any other form of the Lord. Murari promised Mahaprabhu that he would do as he advised and worship Krishna, but when he returned to his home, he could not give up the lotus feet of Ramachandra. Just the thought of it made him upset and he stayed awake the entire night. In the morning, he went to Mahaprabhu and fell at his feet with tears in his eyes. He humbly submitted to the Lord:

I have sold my head to Ramachandra. I cannot remove it from his feet, for as soon as I try, it causes me great pain. I cannot give up the lotus feet of Raghunatha, even though this means disobeying you. What can I do? O merciful one, please allow me to give up my life here before you rather than suffer this fate. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.15.149-151)

srinathe janaki-nathe

cabhede paramatmani /

tathapi mama sarvasvo

ramah kamala-locanah //

Both Narayan, the husband of Lakshmi, and Ramachandra, the husband of Sita are equally the supreme personality of Godhead. Even so, the lotus-eyed Rama

alone is everything to me.

Mahaprabhu was greatly satisfied to hear this exclusive devotional attitude to the worshipable deity. He said, “You are Hanuman himself, the eternal servant of Ramachandra. Indeed, why should you give up worshiping his feet?” Sri Jiva Goswami’s father Anupama was similarly devoted to Rama. Mahaprabhu compared him to Murari when Sanatan told him that Anupama was not able to give up worshiping Rama despite his brothers’ exhortations.

Mahaprabhu said, “Previously, I tested Murari Gupta and found him also to be devoted to Rama in the same way. That devotee who does not abandon his worshipable deity’s lotus feet is truly glorious. Glorious too is that Lord who does not abandon his devotee.” (Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.4.45-46)

Murari Gupta disappeared on the same full-moon day as the autumn rasa-lila festival.

## **Sri Vasudeva Datta Thakur**

vraje sthitau gayakau yau

madhukanṭha-madhuvratau /

mukunda-vasudevau tau

dattau gauraṅga-gayakau //

In Vraja there were two singers named Madhukanṭha and Madhuvrata. They appeared in Chaitanya lila as Mukunda and Vasudeva Datta, who were singers in the society of Lord Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. (Gaura-gaṇoddesa-dipika 140)

Sri Vasudeva Datta was born in the Chittagong district of modern Bangla Desh, in the village of Chanhara, which is under the jurisdiction of the police station named Patiya. This village is situated ten kosas, or about twenty miles, from the

village of Mekhala where Pundarika Vidyanidhi made his home. Mahaprabhu's associate Mukunda Datta was Vasudeva Datta's brother.

In the book Prema-vilasa, it is said that Vasudeva was the older of the two and that they were born in an Ambaṣṭha family:

In the district of Chittagong, there is a village named Cakrashala where lives a respectable family of Ambashtha physicians named Datta. Two great devotees named Mukunda Datta and Vasudeva Datta were born into this family. Both Vasudeva the older and Mukunda the younger came to Nabadwip to live.

Vasudeva Datta Thakur had a beautiful voice and was also well versed in the Saṅgita-sastra. He was one of the chief associates of Mahaprabhu, participating in sankirtan in the home of Srivasa and the streets of Nabadwip. Mahaprabhu enjoyed his association because of his Vaishnava qualities.

Vasudeva Datta is a respected servant of the Lord. A thousand tongues are insufficient to sing his glories. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 1.10.41)

Mahaprabhu said, "Even though Mukunda has been my companion since childhood, I get even more pleasure when I see you." (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.11.138)

Vasudeva had a particularly close friendship with Srivasa Pandit and Shivananda Sena. He lived near Kumarahatta and Kanchra Para, which were the homes of these two great associates of the Lord. Vasudeva was very generous by nature. Never thinking of himself, he spent his money liberally for others. Mahaprabhu saw this and asked Shivananda Sena to become his sarkhel and supervise his affairs.

### **Vasudeva's compassion**

Vasudeva was so distressed by the suffering of the living beings that he was ready to accept their sins and suffer in hell, and he prayed emotionally to Mahaprabhu for such a boon:

“My Lord! You have appeared in this world to save it, so please accept my prayer. You are omnipotent and all-merciful, so if you agree to fulfill my request, it can be easily done. When I see the suffering of the world, my heart is torn apart. So I ask you, Lord, give their sins to me. I will take their sins and suffer in hell on their behalf, but please deliver them from their material disease.”  
(Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.15.160-163)

He wished to take the sins of every single living being and suffer in hell in their place so that they could be liberated. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 1.10.42)

When Mahaprabhu heard this emotional plea on behalf of the living beings of the world, he said to Vasudeva:

“You have desired the liberation of all the living beings in the entire universe, so it will be. They will be saved without having to suffer the consequences of their sins. Krishna is not incapable of doing it, he has all powers, so why should he make you suffer for their sins? Those whose welfare you desire will all become Vaishnavas, and Krishna removes the sins of all those who are Vaishnava.”  
(Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.15.167-169)

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur writes in his Anubhasya to the Chaitanya Charitamrita: “In the Western world, Christians believe that only their guru, Jesus Christ, appeared in this world out of a desire to suffer on behalf of the people of the world by accepting their sins. But here we see that amongst Mahaprabhu’s associates, Vasudeva Datta Thakur, like Hari Das Thakur, showed a compassion millions of times greater and more generous, as he was willing to suffer in the place of all creatures in the universe. By so doing, he taught the world the unlimited nature of the Vaishnava’s selfless love.”

Raghunatha Das Goswami’s diksha guru, Yadunandana Acharya, was blessed by Vasudeva Datta. The author of Chaitanya Bhagavat, Vrindavan Das Thakur, was born in Mamgachi in Modadrumadvipa, one mile from the Purvasthali station on the Howrah-Katwa line of the Eastern Railway. Vasudeva Datta consecrated the worship of the Madana Gopal deity that is still being worshiped at this site.

We can see just how dear Vasudeva Datta was to Mahaprabhu by the Lord’s statements made when he was visiting Srivasa Pandit’s house in Kumarahatta :

Gaurachandra repeated again and again, “This body of mine belongs to Vasudeva. If he wants to sell me, I allow myself to be sold; I will not do



otherwise. I announce this truth to all of you. If someone has even come into the briefest contact with Vasudeva Datta, he will be protected by Krishna. Listen all you Vaishnavas! I tell you the truth: this body of mine belongs to Vasudeva alone.” (Chaitanya Bhagavat 3.5.27-30)

## **Srila Gadadhara Pandit Goswami**

sri-radha-prema-rupa ya pura vṛndavandesvari /  
sa sri-gadadharo gaura-vallabhaḥ paṇḍitakhyakaḥ //  
nirṇitaḥ sri-Svarupair yo vraja-lakṣmitaya yatha /  
pura vṛndavane lakṣmiḥ syamasundara-vallabha /  
sadya gaura-prema-lakṣmiḥ sri-gadadhara-paṇḍitaḥ //  
radham anugata yat tal lalitapy anuradhika /  
ataḥ pravisad eṣa taṁ gaura-candrodaye yatha //

The incarnation of love who previously was the queen of Vrindavan, Radha, is now the beloved of Gaura named Srila Gadadhara Pandit. Svarupa Damodar himself indicated that he was Vraja’s goddess of fortune, the Lakshmi who was previously the beloved of Shyamasundara in Vrindavan. She today has become the goddess of fortune of love for Gaura and is known as Srila Gadadhara Pandit. Lalita, who is also known as Anuradha, is Radha’s closest friend and confidante. She has also entered into Gadadhara, as was shown in the play Chaitanya-candrodaya. (Gaura-gaṇoddesa-dipika 147-150)

## **Gadadhara-tattva**

gadadhara paṇḍitadi prabhura nija-sakti /

tan sabhara caraṇe mora sahasra praṇati //

Gadadhara Pandit and others are the lord's own energies. I pay thousands of obeisances to their feet. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 1.1.41)

“Chaitanya Mahaprabhu appears in six features, namely as the two types of guru, the devotees of the lord, the lord himself, his incarnation, his expansion and his energy. According to the principle of simultaneous oneness and difference, they are all identified with Chaitanya Mahaprabhu himself.” (Anubhaṣya to Chaitanya Charitamrita 1.1.37-45)

She who was Radha in Krishna's pastimes became Srila Gadadhara Pandit Goswami in Gaura's lila. When Gaura manifests his identity with Narayan, his shaktis are his wives Lakshmipriya and Vishnupriya. When identifying with Krishna, his shakti is Srila Gadadhara Pandit Goswami.

pancatattvatmakam kṛṣṇam

bhakta-rupa-svarupakam /

bhaktavataaram bhaktakhyam

namami bhaktasaktikam //

I offer my obeisances to Krishna who appears in five features, as a devotee, as the expansion of a devotee, as an incarnation of a devotee, as the pure devotee and as the devotional energy.

These five features all appeared with Chaitanya Mahaprabhu in his incarnation, and in their association, he joyfully performed the congregational chanting of the Holy Names. Though he appears in these five forms, there is in fact no difference between them. The distinctions arise due to his desire to relish different devotional flavors.

Sri Gauranga, Nityananda, Advaita, Gadadhara and Srivasa, etc., make up the Pancha Tattva and there is spiritually no difference between them. The supreme

truth has unlimited different pastimes in order to relish the different tastes of transcendental relationship and thus he separates into these five forms as the form of devotee, the devotional manifestation, the devotional incarnation, the devotional energy and the pure devotee.

jaya jaya nityananda-gadadharera jivana /

jaya jaya advaitadi bhaktera saraṇa //

All glories, all glories, to the life of Nityananda and Gadadhara!

All glories, all glories, to the shelter of all the devotees, headed by Advaita!

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur comments on words “the life of Gadadhara” as follows: “Srila Gadadhara Pandit Goswami is chief amongst the most intimate devotees of Sri Chaitanya. He is the fountainhead of the entire sakti-tattva and is thus present equally in Mahaprabhu’s lilas in Nabadwip and in Nilachala. His childhood home was in Nabadwip; later when he took sannyas, he went to live in Jagannath Puri, in a garden or ṭoṭa by the seashore. Pure devotees who wish to enter into the madhura-rasa of worship to Radha and Govinda take shelter of Gadadhara Pandit and are known as Gauranga Mahaprabhu’s intimate devotees. Those devotees who are not so inclined take shelter of Nityananda Prabhu and engage in pure devotional service in his mood. Some of Mahaprabhu’s devotees, such as Narahari, were followers of Srila Gadadhara Pandit Goswami. They took refuge in him because they knew him to be his dearest associate and thus worthy of their service. Some devotees therefore call Chaitanya ‘the life of Nityananda’ while others called him ‘the life of Gadadhara.’”

## **Early life**

Gadadhara Pandit was born in the village of Beleti Gram in the Chittagong district of modern Bangladesh in a family of Varendra Brahmins in 1408 of the Saka era (i.e., 1486 AD) on the dark moon day of the month of Vaishakh. His father was Madhava Mishra and his mother Ratnavati Devi. He also had a younger brother named Baninath. He belongs to the Kashyapa gotra. He lived in the village of Beleti until he was twelve and then moved with his family to Nabadwip.

Srila Gadadhara Pandit Goswami was a brahmachari for his entire life. Isvara Puripada was very impressed by his indifference to the pleasures of the world and out of affection for him gave him instruction in his own work, Krishna-lilamṛta.

While Mahaprabhu was delighting in his pastimes as a student, there was no scholar in the town of Nabadwip who was not afraid of entering into debate with him. Mahaprabhu would defeat one's position and then show how the same position could be defended. Mukunda, Srivasa and others who knew the joys of the devotional sentiment were afraid of getting involved in such useless debates with Nimai Pandit and so they would avoid him. One day, Nimai Pandit saw Gadadhara and asked him to give the definition of liberation. Gadadhara answered according to the Nyaya school, that liberation consisted in the final eradication of all miseries (atyantika duḥkha-nivṛtti). Nimai then proceeded to show how this definition was inadequate. The other devotees who were listening thought how wonderful it would be if such a brilliant scholar became a devotee. (Chaitanya Bhagavat 1.10)

When Mahaprabhu returned from Gaya and began to reveal the amazing transformations of love, all the devotees were astonished. Sriman Pandit was the first to see Mahaprabhu's ecstatic symptoms and he reported this news to all the others who were overjoyed. When Mahaprabhu decided to reveal his true identity to the devotees, he told them to come to the house of Shuklambar Brahmachari. Gadadhara went to Shuklambar's house but was discreet about his presence there, but when he saw Mahaprabhu become intoxicated with the power of the Holy Names and overcome by the sattvikas, he fainted. Mahaprabhu then said to him: "Gadadhara! You have such good fortune. From your early childhood, your mind has been fixed on Krishna's lotus feet. Meanwhile, I have wasted my life in useless activities. Though I had obtained the great treasure of a human birth, by my misfortune, I made no use of it." (Chaitanya Bhagavat 2.1)

Whenever Mahaprabhu became too overcome by his ecstasies, Gadadhara would calm him. One day, as Mahaprabhu was crying out in separation, “Where is Krishna? Where is Krishna?” Gadadhara said to him, “Your lord Krishna is hidden in your heart.” As soon as he heard this, Mahaprabhu began to claw at his chest, but luckily Gadadhara was able to stop him by holding his hands and calm him by saying, “Krishna will come shortly, be patient.” When Sachi saw how Gadadhara was clever in handling her son, she asked him to always stay by his side to protect him. (Chaitanya Bhagavat 2.2.198-210)

### **Gadadhara takes initiation from Pundarika**

Once, Mahaprabhu was calling out the name of his dear associate, Pundarika Vidyanidhi, saying, “Pundarika, my father!” and crying. None of the devotees present were able to understand what Mahaprabhu meant. When they asked him, he told them about Pundarika Vidyanidhi and explained that he would shortly be coming to Nabadwip Mayapur. When Pundarika did come to Nabadwip, he played the role of a great sense enjoyer in order to dissimulate his greatness. Mukunda Datta was a former resident of Chittagong and knew Pundarika Vidyanidhi, who was formerly Radharani’s father Vrishabhanu, very well. One day, he told Srila Gadadhara Pandit Goswami that he wanted to introduce him to a very advanced Vaishnava and took him to Pundarika’s house. Mukunda introduced the two of them and Vidyanidhi happily engaged Gadadhara in conversation. Gadadhara, however, who had been indifferent to sensual pleasures since he was very young, began to have doubts about Pundarika Vidyanidhi when he saw the expensive furnishings by which he was surrounded, rich sheets as white as the foam of milk, perfumes in the air, the pan he chewed. Mukunda saw the doubt written on Gadadhara’s face and decided to reveal Pundarika’s true devotional nature to him. So he recited a verse in glorification of Krishna from the Bhagavat:

aho bakiyaṁ stana-kala-kuṭaṁ

jighaṁsayapayayaḍ apy asadhvi /

lebhe gatiṁ dhatry-ucitaṁ tato’nyaṁ

kam va dayalum saraṇam prapadye //

How truly amazing! The sister of Bakasura, the evil Putana, was sent on a mission to kill Krishna. He drank the kalakuṭa poison that was mixed with her breast milk, and despite her evil intentions, awarded her the position of a wet nurse (as Ambika Kilimba in Goloka). Who is more merciful than he that I should take shelter of him? (SB 3.2.23)

The instant that Pundarika Vidyanidhi heard this couplet, he began to cry, “Ha Krishna!” and fell to the ground in a faint. Extraordinary ecstatic symptoms began to show on his body. Srila Gadadhara Pandit Goswami was amazed to see this reaction and began to regret the offensive thoughts he had been having just moments before. Later, Mahaprabhu advised Gadadhara that the best way to become free of the offense was to take initiation from Pundarika Vidyanidhi, and so he became his disciple.

### **The Lord’s constant companion**

Srila Gadadhara Pandit Goswami was Mahaprabhu’s constant companion. He participated in Mahaprabhu’s water sports after the conversion of Jagai and Madhai, he acted in the play about Krishna lila in Chandrasekhara’s house, he observed the great epiphany (maha-prakasa) in Srivasa Angan; he was there when the Kazi was converted and when Mahaprabhu took sannyas; he accompanied Mahaprabhu to Puri where he joined him in cleaning the Gundicha temple, bathing in Narendra Sarovara, etc.

At Chandrasekhara’s house, in the first act of the play about Krishna’s pastimes in Vrindavan that Mahaprabhu staged, Hari Das played the part of the village constable, Srivasa Pandit played Narada Muni and Mahaprabhu Rukmini. In the second act, Gadadhara also dressed as a woman, at which time Mahaprabhu said, “Gadadhara is a part of my Vaikuntha family.” Afterward, Mahaprabhu dressed as the primal energy and gave joy to everyone in the form of the mother of the universe; the devotees too glorified him with hymns addressed to the Divine Mother.

## **Gadadhara's kṣetra-sannyas**

Srila Gadadhara Pandit Goswami went to live in Puri as a kṣetra-sannyasi. Mahaprabhu gave him the service of the Tota Gopinath deity and told him to live in the Yamesvara Tota, or garden. On one occasion, when Gadadhara heard that Nityananda had come to Puri, he invited him to come and take Tota Gopinath's prasada. Nityananda accepted his invitation and brought some fine rice from Bengal as an offering for Gopinath. Gadadhara cooked the rice along with leaves and vegetables from the Yamesvara garden, and when he was offering the foodstuffs to the deity, Mahaprabhu also appeared there, giving him great pleasure. The three of them joyfully took prasada together. (Chaitanya Bhagavat 3.10)

When Mahaprabhu wanted to go to Vrindavan, Ramananda Raya and Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya used all the means at their disposal to make him stay in Puri. On the third caturmasya after his departure from Nabadwip, all the Bengali devotees came to Puri with their wives to see him. After the Gundicha temple cleansing and the Rathayatra, the devotees returned home. As they were leaving, the devotees from Kulina village asked Mahaprabhu to describe the characteristics of a devotee. Mahaprabhu then described the differences between a Vaishnava, a more advanced Vaishnava and the most advanced Vaishnava. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.16.69-75)

When Mahaprabhu showed even more determination to go to Vrindavan, the devotees finally gave him permission to leave after Vijaya-dasami. King Prataparudra gave a great deal of help to smooth his journey. When he crossed the Citrotapala River, Raya Ramananda, Mardaraja, Harichandana continued on in his company. Srila Gadadhara Pandit Goswami was unable to tolerate the idea of separation from the lord and also wished to remain with him, but Mahaprabhu reminded him of his vow to remain in Jagannath Puri and forbade him to go to Vraja. Gadadhara said to him, "Jagannath Puri is wherever you are. My vows to remain in Puri can go to hell." Mahaprabhu again told him not to abandon his service to Gopinath. Gadadhara answered, "Seeing your lotus feet is worth a million services to Gopinath."

When Mahaprabhu said, “If you abandon your duties to Gopinath, you will be at fault.”, Gadadhara answered that he was willing to take that responsibility, but he would not disturb Mahaprabhu by following alongside him, he would go alone to Bengal to see Sachi Mata. Other than Mahaprabhu’s intimate associates, no one is able to understand the extent of Gadadhara Prabhu’s devotion to Gauranga. Love on the path of spontaneous devotion is not easy to comprehend. Gadadhara was ready to abandon his vows, his service, everything for the sake of Mahaprabhu.

When they all arrived at Cuttack, Mahaprabhu called Gadadhara and said, “Your decision to break your vows and leave your service has been made a reality. If you come with me, that will make you happy. But do you want your own happiness or mine? It will make me unhappy if your vows to remain in Puri and to serve Gopinath are broken. If you want my happiness, return to Puri and take up your vows again. That is all I have to say.”

When he heard Mahaprabhu’s words, Gadadhara fell to the ground in a faint. Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya comforted him on Mahaprabhu’s order and then accompanied him back to Puri.

## **Gadai-Gauranga**

Due to her amiable simplicity, Krishna’s wife Rukmini was not always able to understand his joking words and would become frightened. Like her, Gadadhara was also unable to always understand Mahaprabhu’s witticisms or his feigned indifference, all of which would disturb him. Srila Gadadhara Pandit Goswami was by nature simple and affectionate. On one occasion, Vallabha Bhatta came to see Mahaprabhu and the two were engaged in jocular conversation. When Mahaprabhu saw that Vallabha Bhatta was proud of his scholarship, he became somewhat distant from him and started to find flaws in everything that he said.

Vallabha responded to Mahaprabhu’s indifference by starting to visit Gadadhara and making a show of attachment to him. Mahaprabhu did not particularly care for Gadadhara’s relation with Vallabha and began to demonstrate a certain coolness toward him also. This behavior made Gadadhara fear that Mahaprabhu



would ostracize him and so he came and fell at his feet and started to cry. Mahaprabhu laughed and embraced Gadadhara. He said,

”I wanted to agitate you, but you did not become agitated. You said nothing in anger, but patiently bore everything. Your mind was not disturbed by my tricks. By remaining fixed in your simple nature, you have purchased me.” No one can describe the character of Gadadhara’s ecstatic love. Thus, Mahaprabhu has been given the name Gadadhara-praṇanatha, “Gadadhara’s life and soul”. No one can describe the lord’s mercy toward Gadadhara; thus people sing their names together: Gadai-Gauranga. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.7.157-160)

Srila Gadadhara Pandit Goswami remained on this earth only eleven months after Mahaprabhu’s disappearance. In Bhakti-ratnakara, Narahari Chakravarti has described the terrible suffering of Gadadhara in Mahaprabhu’s separation. He remained alive only in order to be able to see Srinivas Acharya.

Repeating the name of Gaurasundara with his eyes closed, his sighs were as hot as flames. No one but the lord can know how Gadadhara Pandit suffered in the absence of Gauranga. His motionless body remained alive only so that he could bestow his mercy on Srinivas Acharya. (Bhakti-ratnakara 3.142-4)

Srila Gadadhara Pandit Goswami disappeared at Puri on the dark moon day of Jyestha in 1456 of the Saka era (1535 AD).

## **Sri Buddhimanta Khan**

Buddhimanta Khan was very dear to Lord Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. He was one of the Lord’s greatest servants who obeyed him from the time of his birth. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 1.10.74)

## **Buddhimanta’s previous life**

Buddhimanta Khan is considered to be one of Chaitanya's branches. In his *Nabadvipa-dhama-mahatmya*, Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur has written the following in connection with the village of Suvarna Bihar in Godrumadvipa: "In the Satya Yuga, a pious king named Suvarna Sena lived in this village of Suvarna Bihar. Through the blessings of Narada Muni, this king obtained love for Radha and Krishna as well as for their joined form, Sri Gauranga Mahaprabhu. One night, Suvarna Sena saw Gaura and Gadadhara with all their associates in a dream. When he awoke, the King cried out in distress from the loss of the vision. Suddenly, he heard a voice from the sky which told him that when Mahaprabhu appeared again in the Age of Kali, then the King would also take birth as Buddhimanta Khan in order to expand the Lord's pastimes."

### **Buddhimanta's charitable works**

Buddhimanta lived in Nabadwip. He and Mukunda Sanjaya were amongst the richest people in the town. They performed charitable works such as providing medicines and treatment for the poor who fell ill. Once, when the Lord was undergoing ecstatic transformations as a householder, the other devotees called Buddhimanta Khan in order to see to his treatment.

Buddhimanta paid for all the costs of Mahaprabhu's wedding when he married for the second time, to Vishnupriya, the daughter of a local zamindar's priest, Sanatan Mishra. He participated in all of Mahaprabhu's Nabadwip pastimes--in the kirtans at Srivasa Angana, at Chandrasekhara's house, in the public kirtans, the liberation of Jagai and Madhai, and the water sports in the Ganges.

### **Buddhimanta at Chandrasekhara's house**

One day Mahaprabhu revealed his desire to put on a play about Vraja lila and

dance in the mood of Maha Lakshmi. He told Buddhimanta Khan that he wanted him to take responsibility for the costumes and decorations. He himself dressed Mahaprabhu.

[Mahaprabhu said,] Buddhimanta Khan! Go quickly and arrange for costumes for today I shall dance.” Upon receipt of the order, Sadashiva [and] Buddhimanta Khan immediately returned home, feeling unlimited joy. The devotees immediately put up an awning of bamboo and cloth and there started dressing the actors in the play. Buddhimanta brought the costumes and placed them before the Lord. (Chaitanya Bhagavat 2.18.13-16)

Look here. This is the house of Chandrasekhara Acharya. The Lord came here with his dearest associates. Sadashiva and Buddhimanta Khan took charge of the costumes and dressing the actors. (Bhakti-ratnakara 12.2902-3)

When Mahaprabhu took sannyas in Katwa, he went to Shantipur where he met with all the Nabadwip devotees, including Buddhimanta Khan. He also accompanied the Bengali devotees to Puri to see the Lord. The Lord also lovingly accepted Buddhimanta Khan and the Bengali devotees’ gifts of foodstuffs, etc., which they brought to Puri for him.

Buddhimanta Khan, for whom the Lord’s order had been the only interest from his very birth, also went. (Chaitanya Bhagavat 3.8.30)

## **Sri Nandana Acharya**

According to both the Chaitanya Bhagavat and the Chaitanya Charitamrita, Nandana Acharya’s father was named Caturbhuja and he had two brothers, Vishnu Das and Ganga Das. (Chaitanya Bhagavat 3.5.74; Chaitanya Charitamrita 1.11.43) They were a family of Bhattacharya Brahmins residing in Nabadwip. Both Vishnu Das and Ganga Das stayed in Nilachala with Mahaprabhu for a while. Mahaprabhu, Nityananda Prabhu and Advaita Acharya all hid in Nandana Acharya’s house at one time or another. Nityananda Prabhu stayed at his house while at Nabadwip.

Nandana Acharya is a branch of the Chaitanya tree that is celebrated throughout the world because two of the Prabhus hid in his house. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 1.10.39)

In the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava Abhidhana, a different family tree is given for Nandana Acharya. The author of that dictionary writes: “Nandana Acharya came from a family of astrologer Brahmins. His father’s name was Lakshmi Narayan. Lakshmi Narayan had two sons: Nandana Acharya and Bhagavan Adhikari Sarvabhauma. Lakshmi Narayan had a reputation as a seer and astrologer. He was present when Mahaprabhu was born. Nandana Acharya is included as a branch of the Chaitanya tree. He was lame. When Mahaprabhu returned from South India, all the devotees were overjoyed to see him. Even though Nandana Acharya was lame, he went ahead of everyone else to perform puja to the Lord.

Nandana Acharya came forward with a deep attachment. Though lame, he went to the front of the group of devotees.

Sri Nandana Acharya came from a family of Sakadvipi Brahmins descended from Shanti Muni, the son of Parashara. He belonged to the Bharata branch of the Vatsya gotra from Rarha. He lived for some time in Bahirkhaṇḍa village near Tarakesvara in present-day Birbhum before moving to Nabadwip where he made his home in Srihatiya or Dakshin Para.”

It is also written in the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava Abhidhana: “The Nandana mentioned in the Chaitanya Charitamrita as the brother of Ganga Das and Vishnu Das is a different person. He is counted as a branch of Nityananda Prabhu. He is a writer of poetry and songs, but little else is known about him. He is not Nandana Acharya.”

### **Nityananda Prabhu in the house of Nandana Acharya**

When Sriman Nityananda Prabhu he was in a mood of separation from Krishna, so he wandered all over India looking for him until finally he came to

Vrindavan. There he heard that Krishna had already appeared in Nabadwip Mayapur. The son of Nanda, Sri Krishna, had appeared as Gaurahari, the son of Sachi. Nityananda Prabhu, who is none other than Balaram himself, quickly came to Nabadwip and started to live incognito in the house of Nandana Acharya. Nandana Acharya felt that his life had been fulfilled once he had laid eyes on Nityananda and gained the opportunity to serve him. Mahaprabhu knew of Nityananda's coming through a dream. He told the other devotees that Nityananda Prabhu had arrived in town and sent Srivasa Pandit and Hari Das Thakur out to look for him. These two searched through the entire town but could not find him anywhere. When Mahaprabhu heard from Srivasa Pandit and Hari Das Thakur that Nityananda was not in Nabadwip, he slightly smiled in his omniscience and took the devotees with him to Nandana Acharya's house.

The devotees were astonished to behold a personality as effulgent as a million suns. In order to reveal Nityananda's true identity to all his devotees, Mahaprabhu signaled Srivasa Pandit to sing a verse from the Bhagavatam:

barhapiḍam naṭa-vara-vapuḥ karṇayoḥ karṇikaram  
vibhrad-vasaḥ kanaka-kapisam vaijayantim ca malam /  
randhran veṇor adhara-sudhaya purayan gopa-vṛndai-  
rvṛnaranyaṁ sva-pada-ramaṇaṁ pravisad gita-kirtiḥ //

Krishna, whose glories are sung to the world by the cowherd boys,  
dressed as a dancing performer,  
a peacock feather decorating his topknot,  
karṇikara flowers behind his ears,  
a golden cloth covering his body  
and a victory garland around his neck,  
entered Vrinda's forest,  
the pleasure garden of his auspiciously marked feet,

while filling the holes of his flute

with the nectar of his lips. (Srimad Bhagavatam 10.21.5)

As soon as he heard this verse, Nityananda Prabhu uttered the words “Ha Krishna!” and fainted, the eight ecstatic symptoms manifesting in his body. Mahaprabhu became anxious to be reunited with his brother and he clutched Nitai to his bosom while glorifying him to the assembled devotees.

Sri Nandana Acharya was fortunate, indeed. Just look, Srinivas, this is his house. The Lord came to this house with all the devotees and found Nityananda sitting here in meditation. The devotees stood here gazing upon his incomparable beauty. (Bhakti-ratnakara 12.2422-4)

### **Advaita Acharya hiding in Sri Nandana Acharya’s house**

When the Vyasa Puja at Srivasa Angana had been completed, Mahaprabhu, Nityananda Prabhu and their other associates became fully absorbed in the ecstasies of sankirtan. One day, Mahaprabhu was absorbed in the mood of the Divinity, and ordered Ramai Pandit to go to Advaita’s house and tell him of his manifestation. He also said to Ramai, “In order to bring the Lord of Goloka down to this earth, Sri Advaita Acharya called to him while performing puja with Ganges water and tulasi leaves. This Lord has now appeared in Nabadwip along with Nityananda Prabhu. Therefore, Advaita should immediately come to Srivasa Angana with his wife and all the paraphernalia for worship.”

Ramai acted according to Mahaprabhu’s instruction and went to Advaita Acharya’s house. Advaita asked him why he had come. When he heard from Ramai that Mahaprabhu had manifested in Nabadwip, he and his wife Sitadevi, his son Achyutananda, and a number of his other followers all became excited and shed tears of joy. Advaita did as he had been instructed, gathering up the paraphernalia for worship and made for Nabadwip with his entourage. Nevertheless, he wished to test Mahaprabhu first, and so he stopped at Nandana Acharya’s house and remained there. He sent Ramai ahead but told him to keep his presence there secret and to tell Mahaprabhu instead that he had refused to

come.

As the Supersoul, Mahaprabhu could understand exactly what Advaita was trying to do. He revealed a majestic divine form on the altar of Srivasa's house. He indicated to Nityananda Prabhu to hold the parasol over his head and the other devotees to engage in various services. Mahaprabhu then announced to all the devotees, "Advaita Acharya has decided to test me. He is hiding at Nandana Acharya's house with all the paraphernalia for my puja." He again sent Ramai to tell him that he was aware of his plan and to tell him to quickly come. When Advaita got the direct order from Mahaprabhu a second time, he joyfully went to Srivasa's house. As soon as he saw the Lord, he fell to the ground at some distance to pay obeisance to his lotus feet and began to recite hymns of glorification. Seeing the Lord's opulent form, Advaita became motionless and then began to glorify the unequalled mercy of the Lord Gaurahari everywhere. He then washed the lord's lotus feet and then worshiped him with the five ingredients (pancopacara), using the following mantra to do so:

namo brahmaṇya-devaya go-brahmaṇa-hitaya ca /

jagad-dhitaya kṛṣṇaya govindaya namo namaḥ //

I pay my obeisances to Krishna Govinda, the lord of the brahminical society, to him who is the source of the cows' and the Brahmins' welfare, and who is the source of the welfare of the entire universe.

Mahaprabhu then commanded Advaita Prabhu to get up and dance. Advaita started to dance madly until he became completely intoxicated, immersing all the watching devotees in a flood of ecstasy.

## **Mahaprabhu hiding in the house of Nandana Acharya**

The local atheists started to plot against Mahaprabhu after having been beaten in debates by his talent and learning. They fabricated complaints and went to the

local administrator. That day, when he returned home, Mahaprabhu started sankirtan in order to put an end to the atheists' blasphemous ways. However, on that day, Mahaprabhu noticed that he was not feeling the usual emotion in the divine names and made public his distress. Advaita Acharya gave the following reasons for his lack of ecstasy on that day: "You have made Nityananda the keeper of the storehouse of love. You have deprived Srivasa and myself of this love. On the other hand, you have given it to everyone else, even to those in the lower castes. So, I have dried up the ocean of your prema. That is why you are not feeling anything today."

When Mahaprabhu heard this, he decided that he could not bear to live another minute in a useless body devoid of prema, and so he went and jumped into the Ganges, intending to drown himself. Nityananda and Hari Das immediately jumped in after him and pulled him out. Mahaprabhu then revealed to these two his intention to go and stay out of the sight of the other devotees for a while at the house of Nandana Acharya. They were thus the only ones to know that he was there.

The other devotees found no sign of Mahaprabhu anywhere and began to feel intense separation from him. Advaita Prabhu even undertook a fast. Meanwhile, Mahaprabhu sat down on the deity's throne in Nandana Acharya's house and engaged its owner in various kinds of service. Mahaprabhu also instructed him not to tell anyone that he was at his place, but Nandana answered, "You are the wealth of the devotees' hearts. The devotees are the ones who reveal you. How will you possibly be able to remain hidden from them?"

Indeed, the Lord was aware that the devotees were unable to tolerate the pain of his absence, and so he asked Nandana Acharya to bring Srivasa Pandit there. Srivasa recounted to him that Advaita was extremely upset and that he was fasting. Mahaprabhu immediately accompanied Srivasa to Advaita's residence and when he saw him lying faint and weak on the floor, he felt himself to be a great offender. Advaita himself rose up from his faint and prayed the Lord again and again for forgiveness for his rash statements and asked that he be allowed a place at the Lord's lotus feet so that he could serve him birth after birth. (Chaitanya Bhagavat 2.17)

### **Nandana Acharya's participation in other lilas**



After taking sannyas in Katwa, when Mahaprabhu was brought to the house of Advaita in Shantipur by Nityananda's trickery, then Sachi and other residents of Nabadwip came to see him there. Amongst these residents of Nabadwip was Nandana Acharya. The year that Raghava Pandit first brought his famous bags of food (Raghavera jhali) to Mahaprabhu in Puri, Nandana Acharya also gave him some food preparations which pleased the Lord greatly. Nandana Acharya was also among those devotees whose invitations to lunch were accepted by the Lord at Puri. His name is also mentioned by Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya when he described the Lord's devotees to King Prataparudra (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.11.89).

Nandana Acharya was also amongst the participants in the nightly kirtan at Srivasa Angan and in the procession to the Kazi's house. In Puri, he participated in the cleaning of the Gundicha temple and the Nrisingha temple and the Lord's bathing pastimes in Indradyumna Sarovara. He also took part in the feast in the Ai Tota gardens and, of course, the Rathayatra festival.

Srila Bhakti Saranga Goswami Maharaj, the founder of the Gaudiya Sangha and who has now entered the eternal activities of the Lord, constructed a temple at the site of Nandana Acharya's house in Ishodyan, Mayapur. The temple houses deities of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and Nityananda Prabhu.

The date and place of Nandana Acharya's appearance and disappearance are unknown.

## **Chandrasekhara Acharya**

candrasekhara acaryas

candro jneyo vicakṣaṇaiḥ |

sriman uddhavadaso'pi

candravesavatarakaḥ ||

The wise know that Chandrasekhara Acharya is an incarnation of the moon god, while Uddhava Das is also a partial incarnation of the moon. (Gaura-gaṇoddesa-dipika 112)

One of the great branches of the Chaitanya tree is called Acharyaratna, also known as Chandrasekhara; his entourage forms another group of branches and sub-branches. Mahaprabhu danced in his house in the mood of the goddess. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 1.10.12-13)

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur has written: “Chandrasekhara was one of the nine treasures, or the god Chandra. His home is known as Vrajapattana [or the place where Mahaprabhu enjoyed his pastimes of putting on a play about Vrindavan].”

Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur writes in his Amṛta-pravaha-bhaṣya that according to some sources, Acharyaratna was Chaitanya Mahaprabhu’s meso, i.e, the husband of his mother’s sister.” This has been explained more conclusively in the Gauḍiya Vaiṣṇava Abhidhana, “He was Chaitanya Mahaprabhu’s uncle, that is he married Sachidevi’s sister Sarvajaya.”

In the book called Sakha-nirṇayamṛta by Srila Gadadhara Pandit Goswami’s disciple Yadunatha Das, Chandrasekhara Acharya’s identity is revealed in the following way:

paurṇamasi-pr̥thu-prema-

patraṁ sri-candrasekharam |

apara-karuṇa-pura-

paurṇamasiti saṁjnakam ||

Chandrasekhara was the recipient of Paurṇamasi Devi’s deepest love. He is known as the full moon of unlimited compassion.

**Chandrasekhara Acharya was also born in Sylhet.**

Srivasa Pandit, Sri Rama Pandit and Chandrasekhara Deva are all worshipable throughout the three worlds; they, as well as Murari Gupta, the physician who cures the material disease, all appeared in Sylhet. (Chaitanya Bhagavat 1.2.34-5)

### **All of Mahaprabhu's elders appear on this earth prior to his birth.**

Many of them took birth prior to him on the order of the Supreme Lord, and remained hidden in Nadia. They included Chandrasekhara, Jagadisa, Gopinath, Sriman, Murari, Sri Garuḍa, and Ganga Das. (Chaitanya Bhagavat 1.2.98-9)

Sri Chandrasekhara lived just next door to Jagannath Mishra in Mayapur. The Chaitanya Math established by Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur now stands on this site. Prior to Mahaprabhu's appearance, Chandrasekhara and his wife would visit the Mishra household regularly and would look after their well-being, helping to manage their affairs. When Jagannath departed from this world, Chandrasekhara took over the complete responsibility for Sachi Devi's household affairs.

### **Pastimes in Chandrasekhara's house**

After Mahaprabhu's return from Gaya, when he commenced his sankirtan movement in the company of his devotees, he would sometimes hold his nightly kirtans in the house of Chandrasekhara, just as he would in the house of Srivasa Pandit.

All the Vaishnavas felt great enthusiasm when they heard that Mahaprabhu had begun his sankirtan movement. Every night, these kirtans took place in the house of Srivasa Pandit, and on certain occasions, in the house of Chandrasekhara Acharya. (Chaitanya Bhagavat 2.8.110-1)

Jagai and Madhai were two brothers who, though born in a high caste Brahmin family, had nevertheless adopted robbery as their livelihood. By Mahaprabhu's causeless mercy, all of their sins were cleansed and they were given the opportunity to engage in sankirtan with the rest of his devotees. Chandrasekhara Acharya was amongst the associates of the Lord who witnessed these wonderful events. "Vakresvara Pandit and Chandrasekhara Acharya both know all the glories of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu." (Chaitanya Bhagavat 2.13.240)

Mahaprabhu put on a play about Vraja lila in the house of Chandrasekhara Acharya. This lila has been described in great detail by Vrindavan Das Thakur in his Chaitanya Bhagavat, in the eighteenth chapter of the Madhya-khaṇḍa. Krishnadas Kaviraj Goswami has briefly mentioned the event in his Chaitanya Charitamrita:

Then Mahaprabhu performed Krishna lila in the house of Chandrasekhara. He himself took on the role of Rukmini and others as well, becoming in turn Durga, Lakshmi and the Divine Energy. Then he sat down on the deity throne and distributed love of God to all the assembled devotees. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 1.17.241-2)

Here is a brief summary of the story as found in the Chaitanya Bhagavat: One day Mahaprabhu revealed his desire to put on a play with his devotees about his pastimes in Vrindavan. He told Sadashiva Buddhimanta Khan who would play which role and what they should wear.

Then Sachi's son, completely absorbed in the kirtan of the lord's names called out to Sadashiva Buddhimanta Khan. "Today I will go to Chandrasekhara's house where I will dance in the dress of Lakshmi. Arrange for conch bracelets, saris, bodices, golden ornaments and other paraphernalia that will be suitable for our costumes." Having so ordered him, Mahaprabhu and his companions went down the path which led to Chandrasekhara's house. (Bhakti-ratnakara 12.1949-52)

According to his instruction, Buddhimanta then arranged for appropriate dress and makeup for those who would be in the play, pleasing Mahaprabhu immeasurably. Mahaprabhu announced that he would dance in the role of Lakshmi, but that only those whose senses were controlled would be able to sit in the audience. Advaita Acharya, Srivasa Pandit and others sadly said that since they had no control over their senses they would be ineligible to watch.

Mahaprabhu laughed slightly at hearing this and said that for that day at least everyone would become a great yogi and would not be bewildered by his performance.

Sachi Mata and Vishnupriya Devi came out of a desire to see Mahaprabhu dance as Lakshmi, and all the other devotees also came with their families. Advaita Acharya took the role of the [viduṣaka] or clown, while Hari Das Thakur played the role of the town constable and Srivasa Pandit dressed up as Narada Muni. The performance began when Mukunda began to sing Krishna kirtan. Hari Das Thakur came dancing in, twirling his baton, and he told everyone to watch the play and the Lord's dancing attentively. Srivasa Pandit in the role of Narada Muni said, "I have been wandering through the universes hoping to get a glimpse of Krishna. I went to Vaikuntha, but found the door closed and the house empty. Then I heard that Krishna had come to Nadia and had dressed up as Lakshmi and was about to dance just as she would." When Sachi saw Srivasa in his identity as Narada she fainted in her amazement, but the other women brought her back to consciousness by chanting the name of Krishna.

In the next act, Mahaprabhu came out dressed as Rukmini. Totally absorbed in the mood of Rukmini, he recited her letter to Krishna from the Bhagavatam, and as he did so, he cried and wrote on the ground with his toes. When the Vaishnavas saw this scene, they were overwhelmed by the ecstasy of divine love.

Later on in the evening, Srila Gadadhara Pandit Goswami came onto the stage dressed as a gopi and began to dance like a woman in love. Mahaprabhu and Nityananda then entered the stage area, Mahaprabhu in the dress of the Adya sakti and Nityananda as an old woman, Radha's maternal grandmother. When the members of the audience saw Mahaprabhu, each saw him according to his or her own mood: some as Kamala, some as Lakshmi, others as Sita and yet others as Mahamaya. Even those who had known Nimai since his birth, including Sachi, were unable to recognize him. In the guise of playing the roles of all the different female divinities, Mahaprabhu revealed his divine energies and taught the proper respect due to each one of them. While the Lord was thus dancing as the Adya sakti, Nityananda fainted and all the other devotees began to cry loudly.

Then the Lord revealed another amazing pastime: he took on the mood of Maha Lakshmi, sat down on the deity throne and placed the Gopinath deity on his lap. When the devotees saw this they began to sing hymns of praise to Maha

Lakshmi. As this was going on, day suddenly broke and the devotees were saddened to know that the wonderful night had come to an end. When he saw their sadness, Mahaprabhu took the form of the Mother of the Universe and one by one, took all the devotees on his lap and gave her breast to drink. The devotees' sadness disappeared in a moment.

By the lord's inconceivable potencies, there remained a divine light in Chandrasekhara's house for seven days and nights. It was so bright that people were not able to open their eyes there. When asked why this was so, the Vaishnavas would only smile in response.

### **Participation in other pastimes**

Chandrasekhara Acharya was also present in the sankirtan procession through Nabadwip when Mahaprabhu went to Chand Kazi's house to deliver him. He was also present when Mahaprabhu took sannyas in Katwa, and he performed all the rituals on his behalf at that time.

So saying, Keshava Bharati went to Katwa. Mahaprabhu followed later to take sannyas. Nityananda, Mukunda Datta and Chandrasekhara accompanied him and performed all the rituals. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 1.17.272-3)

Afterwards, Mahaprabhu became frantic to see Vrindavan and set off in that direction. However, Nityananda tricked him into going to the bank of the Ganges opposite Shantipur, in the meantime, sending Chandrasekhara with a message for the people of Nabadwip that Mahaprabhu had taken sannyas and was in Shantipur.

The children showed Mahaprabhu the way to the Ganges, and he set off in that direction, completely absorbed in Krishna consciousness. Nityananda Prabhu said to Chandrasekhara, "Go immediately to Advaita Acharya and tell him that I am coming there with the Lord. Tell him to wait for us with a boat. Then go to Nabadwip and fetch Sachi Mata and the devotees." (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.3.19-22)

Chandrasekhara did as he was commanded and brought Sachi Mata to Advaita's house in a palanquin. The Nabadwip devotees also accompanied them.

In the morning, Acharyaratna put Sachi in a palanquin and set off to Shantipur in the company of the other devotees. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.3.137)

When Mahaprabhu came back from South India to Puri, he sent Kala Krishna Das (whom he had rescued from the Bhattahari women) with Nityananda and some other devotees to inform the Bengali Vaishnavas of his return. Kala Krishna Das met with Chandrasekhara on that occasion. Chandrasekhara also regularly accompanied the other devotees to Puri to spend Caturmasya with Mahaprabhu. He participated with him in all the pastimes there, such as cleaning the Gundicha temple, playing watersports in Narendra Sarovara, etc.

## **Sri Pundarika Vidyanidhi**

vṛṣabhanutaya khyataḥ pura yo vraja-maṇḍale /  
adhuna puṇḍarikakṣo vidyanidhi-mahasayaḥ //  
svakiya-bhavam asvadya radha-viraha-kataṛaḥ /  
caitanyaḥ puṇḍarikakṣam aye tatavadat svayam //  
prema-nidhitaya khyatiṁ gauro yasmai dadau sukhi /  
madhavendrasya śiṣyatvat gauravaṁ ca sadakarot //  
tat-prakasa-viśeṣo'pi misraḥ sri-madhavo mataḥ /  
ratnavati tu tat-patni kirtida kirtita budhaiḥ //

He who was previously known in Vraja as Vrishabhanu, is known here as Sri Pundarikaksha Vidyanidhi. When Mahaprabhu was in his own mood as Krishna

and felt the pain of separation from Radha, he would call him “father!”. Gaurachandra was happy with Pundarika and named him Premanidhi, or “the treasure house of love”. Mahaprabhu always treated him with respect because he was the disciple of Madhavendra Puri. Madhava Mishra is said to be his expansion and his wife Ratnavati was Kirtida in Vraja. (Gaura-gaṇoddesa-dipika 54)

Pundarika Vidyanidhi’s father was named Banesvara and his mother, Ganga Devi. He was born on Vasanta-pancami, the fifth day of the waxing moon in the month of Magh in Chakrashala in Chittagong. His home, or Sripaṭ, used to stand in the village of Mekhala which is two miles east of the Hat Hajari police station, about twelve miles north of the city of Chittagong. Vidyanidhi’s father was a Varendra Brahmin who hailed from the town of Baghiya in the district of Dhaka. Pundarika Vidyanidhi himself was a wealthy zamindar of Chakrashala.

He is a zamindar from Chakrashala, extremely rich and very pure in his actions. He is a Varendra Brahmin, whose lineage is extremely respectable. His name is Sri Pundarika Vidyanidhi. Sometimes he stays in Chittagong, and sometimes in Nabadwip. He is a disciple of Madhavendra Puri. (Prema-vilasa, 22)

## **The Lord glorifies Pundarika**

Sri Pundarika Vidyanidhi came to Nabadwip because he wished to live by the banks of the Ganges. Mahaprabhu, the indweller of all beings, knew prior to his coming that he had such a desire, and one day in the assembly of devotees started calling out, “Pundarika, my friend, my father!” and crying.

When his associates asked him why he was crying in this way, the Lord described Pundarika Vidyanidhi to them in the following way: “His character is quite extraordinary. Just by hearing his name, the whole world is purified, but he dresses and looks just like a materialistic person in the midst of the accouterments of the life of pleasure. No one is able to recognize him as a Vaishnava, yet he remains constantly merged in the deep ocean of devotion for Krishna. He never bathes in the Ganges because he is afraid to touch the holy waters with his feet, which would show disrespect. He only goes to take darshan



of the Ganges at night and from a distance. He cannot bear to see people engaged in offensive behavior to the Ganges by gargling, cleaning their teeth, washing their hair in her waters, so he never goes there during the daytime. He never engages in worship of the deity without having taken a drink of Ganges water. He has homes in both Chittagong and in Nabadwip and will soon be arriving here. Because of his apparently materialistic behavior, you will not be able to recognize him, but I feel unwell because I am not able to see him.”

The Supreme Lord has appeared in Nabadwip, but he heaves long sighs because he doesn't see Pundarika Vidyanidhi. Lord Gauranga stands up and starts to dance, calling out loudly,, “Pundarika, my father! Pundarika, my friend, my father! When will I see you?” (Chaitanya Bhagavat 2.7.11-3)

It is thought that Pundarika Vidyanidhi took initiation from Madhavendra Puripada at the same time that Advaita Acharya did. Mahaprabhu always showed him the respect that was due the godbrother of his own guru. In the Chaitanya Charitamrita, Krishnadas Kaviraj Goswami writes:

I know Sri Pundarika Vidyanidhi to be a major branch, for the Lord himself cried while spontaneously calling out his name. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 1.10.14)

### **Gadadhara becomes Pundarika's disciple**

Srila Gadadhara Pandit Goswami, Mukunda Datta and Vasudeva Datta were also originally from Chittagong and so they were acquainted with Pundarika Vidyanidhi. Indeed Gadadhar Pandit's father Madhava Mishra was his good friend. Mukunda Datta knew his transcendental personality and that he was a Vaishnava, but Gadadhara did not, even though he was from the same town. This was, of course, a pretense for the sake of the lila.

When Pundarika was living in Nabadwip, Mukunda Datta told Gadadhar one day that he wanted to introduce him to a great Vaishnava. Srila Gadadhara Pandit Goswami was a brahmachari from childhood and extremely detached from the senses and ascetic in his lifestyle. When he saw Pundarika sitting on comfortable

cushions covered in sheets as white as the foam of milk, and wearing very expensive clothes and perfumes, smoking from a hookah, and generally surrounded by all the trappings of a sensual lifestyle, he was unable to recognize him as a Vaishnava. Indeed, he felt let down.

Mukunda could see from Gadadhara's face what was going through his head, and in order to bring out Pundarika's inner mood, recited two verses from the Bhagavatam that enkindle the flames of love for Krishna.

aho bakiyaṁ stana-kala-kuṭaṁ

jighaṁsayapayayad apy asadhvi |

lebhe gatiṁ dhatry-ucitaṁ tato'nyaṁ

kaṁ va dayaluṁ saraṇaṁ prapadye || (Srimad Bhagavatam 3.2.23)

putana lokabalaghni rakṣasi rudhiraṣana |

jighaṁsayapi haraye stanaṁ dattvapa sad-gatiṁ || (Srimad Bhagavatam 10.6.35)

How truly amazing! The sister of Bakasura, the evil Putana, was sent on a mission to kill Krishna. He drank the kalakuṭa poison mixed with her breast milk, and despite her evil intentions, awarded her the position of a wet nurse (as Ambika Killimba in Goloka). Who is more merciful than he that I should take shelter of him?

That Rakshasi Putana was a blood-drinking killer of infants. Even though she wanted to kill Krishna, because she gave him her breast, she attained the auspicious goal of a nurse in Goloka.

As soon as he heard these two verses in glorification of Krishna's mercy, Sri Pundarika Vidyanidhi cried out "Ha Krishna!" and fell to the floor in a swoon. He began to roll on the floor in ecstasy, knocking over the hookah and tearing his clothes.

When he saw these transcendental symptoms of love on Pundarika's body, Gadadhara realized that he had committed an offense, which he began to regret. He decided that the only way to rid himself of this offense would be to take initiation from Pundarika, and he related this idea to Mukunda. Mukunda then

communicated his desire to Pundarika who happily set a date for the auspicious act. Mahaprabhu also gave his approval and so Gadadhara took mantra initiation from Pundarika Vidyanidhi.

In Krishna lila, Sri Pundarika Vidyanidhi is Vrishabhanu and Srila Gadadhara Pandit Goswami is Radha. Because of his identity as Vrishabhanu, Mahaprabhu would call out to him as “father!” when he was himself in the mood of Srimati Radharani. The deep affection from their previous life’s relation became apparent between Puṇḍarika and Gadadhara. No one can understand the pastimes of the Vaishnavas without their mercy.

vaiṣṇava cinite nare devera sakati /

mui kon chara sisu alpamati //

Even the gods are unable to recognize a Vaishnava, so how can a foolish, fallen child like myself do so?

Even though Pundarika Vidyanidhi was a great Vaishnava, he kept it a secret and appeared just like a materialistic person. One cannot recognize a Vaishnava through any superficial examination. Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur writes in his Gauḍiya-bhāṣya to the Chaitanya Bhagavat: “Krishna lila is not accessible to pure sensual understanding. Krishna’s servants occasionally go unrecognized due to their apparently materialistic surroundings. In this way they deceive the conditioned souls. Most scholars take Krishna’s activities to be those of a material lover because of their own obsession with sensuality, and thus they have no faith in him. Others consider Krishna to be an ordinary man who is born and dies and is transformed and thus they have no idea of who he really is. Krishna’s devotees are also sometimes reluctant to reveal their real selves to those who are unworthy and thus make a pretense of being ordinary materialistic persons. Gauranga Mahaprabhu is also sometimes called the pracchanna-avatar or hidden incarnation. In the same spirit, Pundarika put on the show of being sensualist for those who were capable of being deceived by someone’s external appearance.”

One day Pundarika Vidyanidhi came to see Mahaprabhu when it was already quite late at night. As soon as he saw the Lord, he was so overcome by love that he could not even pay his obeisances. Mahaprabhu was similarly anxious to see his most dear devotee, Pundarika and he immediately took him to his breast and

washed him with his tears of love. When the other devotees heard Mahaprabhu cry and call Pundarika “father” and “treasure of love”, they knew that he was most dear to him. Pundarika Vidyanidhi was also known to Mahaprabhu’s associates as Acharyanidhi.

The Supreme Lord cried and called out “Pundarika! Father! Today I have seen my own father! Today I rose from my sleep at an auspicious moment, and I saw Premanidhi standing before me. (Chaitanya Bhagavat 2.7.131, 143)

## **Pundarika in Puri**

Sri Pundarika Vidyanidhi participated in the nightly sankirtan festival in Srivasa Pandit’s house along with Mahaprabhu and his other associates. On Mahaprabhu’s order, Nityananda and Hari Das went door to door to spread the chanting of the Holy Names and thus to liberate the conditioned souls, succeeding in converting Jagai and Madhai. Later, when Jagai and Madhai were sitting amongst the devotees before Mahaprabhu, they also displayed the ecstatic symptoms of prema. Sri Pundarika Vidyanidhi was also present there and he became completely submerged in loving ecstasy to see their fortune. On Mahaprabhu’s order, the devotees led by Advaita Acharya went each year to see the Rathayatra. Krishnadas Kaviraj Goswami describes him as being one of the leaders of Gauranga’s associates as they made the annual trip:

All of Mahaprabhu’s servants such as Advaita, Nityananda, Mukunda, Srivasa, Vidyanidhi, Vasudeva and Murari came together each year to meet with him and they would stay four months. The lord enjoyed many pastimes in their company. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.1.255-6)

Sri Pundarika Vidyanidhi was also present at Jagannath’s Chandana yatra festival when Mahaprabhu and all his devotees would play in the water of Narendra Sarovara, also known as Chandan Pukur. Pundarika and Svarupa Damodar were close friends and they joyfully splashed each other as a part of these pastimes.

Vidyanidhi and Svarupa Damodar were friends. Laughing, they splashed water on each other. (Chaitanya Bhagavat 3.8.124)

Pundarika Vidyanidhi also participated with Mahaprabhu and his associates in the cleaning of the Gundicha temple, afterwards relishing mahaprasad with them.

### **Gadadhara wants to be reinitiated**

One day, Srila Gadadhara Pandit Goswami asked Mahaprabhu if he could retake again. He said,

“Ever since I repeated my iṣṭa-mantra to someone, I have been unable to concentrate when I chant. Please repeat the mantra to me, then my mind will be calmed.”

Mahaprabhu answered,

“You already have a mantropadesaka guru. Be careful, otherwise you will be an offender to him. Everything I have is yours, even my life, what to speak of the mantra. But as long as your guru is alive it is improper for me to repeat it to you.” (Chaitanya Bhagavat 3.10.23-6)

Gadadhara answered, saying, “He isn’t here. Please do it in his place.”

Mahaprabhu replied: “Destiny will bring your guru Vidyanidhi to you.” The omniscient Mahaprabhu continued, “Sri Pundarika Vidyanidhi will be here in Puri to see me in ten days.” And that is what came to pass. Mahaprabhu became ecstatic, crying, “Father has come! Father has come!” Upon Vidyanidhi’s arrival, Gadadhara went to him and asked him to repeat the mantra to him.

Gadadhara Deva asked Premanidhi to again initiate him in the iṣṭa-mantra, which he lovingly did. How can I sufficiently glorify Sri Pundarika Vidyanidhi, who has a loving disciple like Gadadhara Pandit! (Chaitanya Bhagavat 3.10.79-80)

Our most worshipable Srila Prabhupada commented on the above verse (3.10.24) in the following way: “The mantra is that divine sound or sabda brahma which destroys the mental aptitude for sense gratification. If one instructs a faithless person in the divine sound, the mind becomes contaminated. If one’s divine understanding (divya-jnana) is destroyed, then one must seek the same again. Gadadhara Pandit understood this and so he asked Gaurasundara Mahaprabhu to reinitiate him. Mahaprabhu’s judgment, however, was that he should go to his own guru to hear the mantra again.”

The lesson to be learned here is this: Srila Gadadhara Pandit Goswami is Mahaprabhu’s eternal associate; it is thus impossible that any contamination could have entered his mind. It was only through Gadadhara that he was instructing those who would be guru that if one instructs an unqualified person in the mantra, it loses its potency and no longer brings the same joy to the heart of the practitioner. When this happens, it is necessary to go to the guru again and hear the mantra from him again. It is against custom to hear the mantra again from someone who is not one’s guru, because one cannot change initiating spiritual masters in this way. Gadadhara was only saying “I cannot concentrate like before” (na sphure bhalo mati), i.e., “The ecstatic feelings no longer come when I chant”, out of an exemplary humility designed to teach humanity how to act.

## **Jagannath slaps Pundarika**

On the Oṛana Śaṣṭhi festival, Jagannath’s servants dress him in a cloth which still has starch in it.<sup>1072</sup>Footnote: According to Bhaktivinoda Thakur, Oṛana Śaṣṭhi takes place at the beginning of winter. This is the first day that Jagannath is dressed in winter clothes. The winter cloth is called maṛuwa vastra, i.e., it is the cloth that still has maṛa (weaver’s starch) in it and has not been washed. Pundarika Vidyanidhi did not approve of this unwashed cloth being given to the deity and so felt a dislike for the people of Utkala as a result. He had to suffer the consequences.<sup>1072</sup> Sri Pundarika Vidyanidhi was a pure sad-acari, i.e., attached to the proper etiquette of Vaiṣṇavism. When he observed this custom, he did not feel happy about it and said to his friend, Svarupa Damodar, “Why do they give this unwashed cloth to the Lord? The people of this country know the rules in

the Smritis and the Srutis, so why do they give this maruwa cloth to Jagannath?”

Svarupa Damodar answered that the supreme lord is beyond the rules and regulations that have become general custom and that therefore there was no fault. Vidyanidhi did not find this conclusion satisfying and he countered by saying, “That may be true for the Lord himself. But his servants should follow the rules of the scripture. The sri-vigraha of the Lord is beyond the material qualities, so you can say this of him, but his servants are not of the same nature as he. So we have to judge whether their behavior is proper or improper.”

Vidyanidhi is Mahaprabhu’s dear associate and beyond any fault, but once again we see that the lord teaches particular lessons through his devotees. Here he wished to show that we have no right to make judgments or to find fault with the behavior of Jagannath’s devotees. That night an angry Jagannath came to Pundarika Vidyanidhi and gave him a dream vision. Vidyanidhi was frightened when he saw the anger of the lord. He saw both Jagannath and Balaram slap him on each of his cheeks and he started to cry out, “Krishna save me! Krishna, save me! Forgive me my offense!” Jagannath said to him:

“There is no end to your offensiveness. Just as there is no question of pure and impure in my case, the same holds true for my servants. You are staying here; you should know all this. If you thought that it was impure, then why did you stay at all? Go home then, if you want to maintain your purity.” (Chaitanya Bhagavat 3.10.131-2)

When he woke up in the morning, the devotees saw the marks of the Lords’ slaps on his cheeks, which had swollen as a result and they started to laugh. This pastime shows just how dear Sri Pundarika Vidyanidhi was to Jagannath and to Mahaprabhu, for the Lord only comes to his dearest devotees to personally punish them in this way.

That night Jagannath and Balaram came to him and, laughing all the while, slapped him on the cheeks. Pundarika Vidyanidhi felt a secret joy at his swollen cheeks, as has been described by Vrindavan Das in detail. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.16.80-1)

It is stated in the Bhakti-ratnakara that Mahaprabhu celebrated the birth of Radharani at Sri Pundarika Vidyanidhi’s house. (Bhakti-ratnakara 12.3177).

Vrindavan Das Thakur concludes the Chaitanya Bhagavat with the following glorification of Sri Pundarika Vidyanidhi:

The Supreme Lord Gauranga called out the name of this devotee, crying “Pundarika, my father. Anyone who hears about his life and activities will undoubtedly attain Krishna’s lotus feet.” (Chaitanya Bhagavat 3.10.183-4)

## **Sri Shuklambar Brahmachari**

\*suklambaro brahmacari purasid yajnapatnika |

\*prarthayitva yad-annam sri-gauraṅgo bhuktavan prabhuḥ |

\*kecid ahur brahmacari yajnika-brahmaṇaḥ pura ||

Shuklambar Brahmachari was previously one of the wives of the sacrificing Brahmins in Vraja. Mahaprabhu begged food from him and ate it. Some people say that he was one of the sacrificing Brahmins. (Gaura-gaṇoddesa-dipika 191)

## **Shuklambar Brahmachari, a poor mendicant**

Shuklambar Brahmachari is counted among the branches of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. He was a resident of Nabadwip town, manifesting the pastimes of a poor Brahmin who begged for a living. Nevertheless, he had an abiding affection for the Lord. Though to an ordinary conditioned soul he appeared to be a poverty-stricken mendicant, to transcendental eyes he was rich because of his love for Mahaprabhu.

\*prema-dhana vina vyartha daridra jivana |



\*dasa kari betana more deha prema-dhana ||

Without the wealth of love of God, my life is poverty-stricken and worthless. Make me your servant and pay me with the wealth of love. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.20.37)

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur paraphrases Mahaprabhu's speech to Shuklambar Brahmachari in his Gauḍiya-bhāṣya to the Chaitanya Bhagavat: "You are my poor servant lifetime after lifetime. You have no desire to enter into this world to become the head of a household. Rather, you remain a bachelor and beg from house to house, making an offering to me of whatever you amass in this way. Your vow of celibacy is unbreakable. You are free of the mundane egoism that is prominent in householders and retired householders. You are thus factually fixed in the highest state of spiritual life, the highest stage of the renounced order. You are a de facto sannyasi, a completely surrendered carrier of the triple staff because you have successfully engaged every action of your body, mind and speech in my service. I pray constantly for your offerings for you have no interest in enjoying anything which has not been offered to me. It is for this reason that I have made a show of my power and taken everything away from you, making you poor." (2. 16.123)

Shuklambar Brahmachari was very fortunate, for the Lord snatched his food from him and ate it himself. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 1.10.38)

## **Mahaprabhu in Shuklambar's house**

When Mahaprabhu returned from Gaya, he first met with the devotees in Shuklambar Brahmachari's house.

Sriman Pandit then left along the banks of the Ganges, going to Shuklambar Brahmachari's house [where the Lord had announced he would meet with the devotees that night. Having heard Sriman make this announcement,] Gadadhara Pandit quickly followed him there. He hid in Shuklambar's house thinking that he would eavesdrop, as Mahaprabhu would surely discuss some Krishna-related topics. All the loving devotees of the Lord, such as Sadashiva, Murari, Sriman

and Shuklambar, gathered there when suddenly Vishvambhara appeared on the scene. (Chaitanya Bhagavat 2.1.78-82)

Srila Gadadhara Pandit Goswami, Sadashiva, Murari, Srivasa Pandit, Sriman Pandit and others all witnessed the Lord's ecstatic transformations in Shuklambar's house.

### **The Lord snatches rice from Shuklambar's begging bag**

Shuklambar Brahmachari kept body and soul together by offering and eating the foodstuffs which he daily accumulated by begging. Since he was constantly absorbed in the joys of chanting the names of the Lord and remembering his qualities and pastimes, he never suffered from his poverty. Ignorant people thought he was just an ordinary beggar. No one can recognize Mahaprabhu's servants unless he gets the Lord's mercy.

One day, Mahaprabhu was sitting alone in a devotional trance when Shuklambar Brahmachari happened by, his begging bag flung over his shoulder. When he saw the Lord, he started to dance ecstatically. The Lord was pleased to see the depth of Shuklambar's feeling and he began to glorify him. He then plucked a handful of the dry rice from his bag and began to chew it. Shuklambar Brahmachari was troubled to see the Lord eating the uncleaned and broken fragments of low-quality rice and felt that he was committing an offense. The Lord calmed him and said that he always ate his devotee's food with great enthusiasm, but that he had no interest whatsoever in the finest foods of the non-devotee. The devotees were delighted to see the Lord's mercy on Shuklambar Brahmachari, who was then given a blessing by the Lord.

The Lord said, "Listen, Shuklambar Brahmachari. I reside permanently in your heart. Whenever you eat, I eat. When you go on your begging rounds, I accompany you. I have descended to distribute love of Godhead and you are my servant, lifetime after lifetime. I hereby bestow upon you prema bhakti, which is my very soul." When the devotees heard the Lord's blessing, the devotees made a joyful noise, shouting "Jaya, jaya!" (Chaitanya Bhagavat 2.16.133-8)

The Lord was sitting here on this altar of Vishnu, absorbed in the sound of the Holy Name, when Shuklambar Brahmachari passed by on his begging rounds. Mahaprabhu lovingly put his hand on Shuklambar's begging bag and took a handful of unwashed rice, calling him Sudama. Shuklambar Brahmachari made repeated humble comments and danced in the kirtan with the bag still on his shoulder. The Lord and his devotees felt the intensity of their emotions increase as they watched Shuklambar's ecstatic transformations. This is one of the pastimes of the Lord in the house of Srivasa Pandit, after which he went through the town back to his own house. (Bhakti-ratnakara 12.2754-8)

### **The Lord eats at Shuklambar's house**

In the Chaitanya Bhagavat, it is also said that Mahaprabhu ate cooked food in the house of Shuklambar Brahmachari, being attracted by his love. When the Lord announced to Shuklambar that he wished to eat at his house, the brahmachari felt nervous because he was afraid that he was unable to provide suitable fare for the Lord with his begged rice. However, the Lord repeatedly told him that this was indeed his desire, and so Shuklambar went to the other devotees to ask their advice. The devotees suggested that he cook without touching the food and that this would be satisfactory.

On the day of the invitation, Shuklambar bathed and dressed. He then lit the stove and put water to boil. Then, without touching the rice, he poured it into the water along with the spathe of the plantain tree (thor), all the while emotionally chanting the names, "Jaya Krishna Gopal, Govinda, Vanamali!". At that moment, Lakshmi Devi blessed the food cooked by the devotee by glancing at it. When Mahaprabhu came to Shuklambar's house with his associates, he offered the rice and vegetables to Vishnu by his own hand. When it came time to eat it, he praised its flavor, saying "In my entire life, I have never eaten anything so delicious." Once again the devotees cried at the sight of the Lord's merciful attitude to Shuklambar.

When the devotees saw the majestic blessings of the Lord to Shuklambar Brahmachari, they all began to cry. The Lord continued to eat joyfully, greatly relishing its taste. May all the rich millionaire non-devotees observe the mercy

received by the beggar Shuklambar. No one can attain the Lord's mercy through wealth, high birth or scholarship. The scriptures repeatedly tell us that the Lord is only attracted by the taste of devotion. (Chaitanya Bhagavat 2.26.28-31)

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur comments on this in his Gauḍīya-bhāṣya: "Vishnu is the Lord of the Sacrifice who only eats that which is offered by Brahma in sacrifice. Shuklambar Brahmachari gathered rice by begging from a variety of households. This rice is often parboiled rather than sun-dried rice. Householder Brahmins thus normally consider it contaminated and refuse to accept it. However, Vaishnavas hold that rice received from begging is superior to any other rice because it has been obtained by the mercy of the Lord. Though superficially this rice appears to be contaminated by the touch of non-devotees and offering it is thus a deviation from the usual rules and regulations, in Mahaprabhu's path, the purity of a devotee's heart is the most important ingredient in maha prasada. One should not think that a millionaire is the only person who can offer foods which are suitable for the Lord. Shuklambar was poverty-stricken, but the Lord was satisfied with the food that he had gathered through begging. The sinful and devotionally-challenged cannot understand this at all."

Shuklambar Brahmachari, whose rice had been eaten by Lord Gaurasundara, joyfully returned to his home. (Chaitanya Bhagavat 3.8.23)

One day, the Lord asked Shuklambar to cook lunch for him. This is the street that the devotees took to go to his house. What can I say? The Lord ate Shuklambar's cooking and a wonderful pastime took place there. (Bhakti-ratnakara 12.3467-8)

## **Sri Sadashiva Pandit**

Sadashiva Pandit is considered a Chaitanya branch of the tree of divine love. He was a resident of Nabadwip who participated in the beginnings of the sankirtan movement. When Nityananda Prabhu first arrived in Nabadwip, he stayed in his

house.

Sadashiva Pandit placed all his hopes at the Lord's feet. His house was Nityananda Prabhu's first residence in Nabadwip. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 1.10.34)

Sadashiva Pandit, in whose home Nityananda had previously been domiciled, also went [with the party of devotees to Jagannath Puri]. (Chaitanya Bhagavat 3.8.19)

In Vrindavan Das Thakur's Chaitanya Bhagavat, Sadashiva Pandit's name is included in the list of devotees who were present in the kirtan in the house of Srivasa Pandit, along with Gopinath, Jagadisa, Sriman, Sridhara, Vakresvara, Srigarbha and Shuklambar. (Chaitanya Bhagavat 2.8.115)

He was also one of the Lord's companions when he engaged in water sports in the Ganges. He was also one of the first to witness the Lord's displays of ecstatic love after he returned from Gaya. Mahaprabhu also told him to be present in Shuklambar's house where he publicly announced the transformation that had taken place.

[The Lord said,] "You [Sriman Pandit] and Sadashiva Pandit should also come tomorrow to Shuklambar's house. (Chaitanya Bhagavat 2.1.40)

Sadashiva, Murari, Sriman and Shuklambar, and all the Lord's other devoted followers assembled there. (Chaitanya Bhagavat 2.1.81)

On the same occasion, the Lord himself revealed to the world how dearly he considered Sadashiva by unveiling his secret pain to him.

"I will reveal all my sadness to you [Sriman Pandit], Sadashiva and Murari Gupta. (Chaitanya Bhagavat 2.1.70)

When Mahaprabhu decided to put on a performance of Vraja lila in the house of Chandrasekhara Acharya, he gave the responsibility for costumes and makeup to Sadashiva and Buddhimanta Khan. Sadashiva was ecstatic to receive this order from the Lord.

The Lord called Buddhimanta Khan and Sadashiva and told them to go immediately to arrange for the actors' costumes. (Chaitanya Bhagavat 2.18.7)

Overjoyed, Buddhimanta and Sadashiva immediately went home to fulfill the duties given them by the Lord. (Chaitanya Bhagavat 2.18.14)

Here [at the house of Chandrasekhara Acharya], Buddhimanta Khan and Sadashiva Pandit made all kinds of costume arrangements to help Lord Gauranga put on a performance as Lakshmi, so that the entire universe will become intoxicated by the singing of the Holy Names. (Bhakti-ratnakara 12.2903-4)

## **Sridhara Pandit**

khola-becataya khyataḥ paṇḍitaḥ sridharo dvijaḥ |

asid vraje hasya-karo yo namna kusumasavaḥ || (Gaura-gaṇoddesa-dipika 133)

One of the twelve Gopals in Krishna lila was named Kusumasava. He appeared in Gaura-lila as Sridhara Pandit, who was given the nickname khola-beca, “bark-seller.”

Sridhara Pandit was a resident of Nabadwip. Nabadwip is composed of nine islands, of which the central island is known as Antardvipa. He used to live at the northern extremity of Mayapur and to the southeast of the Chand Kazi's samadhi, in the place that now goes by the name of Sridhara Angan. During his lifetime, it was a banana orchard, which nowadays is no longer the case, at least not to our mortal eyes. During this incarnation, Sridhara played the role of a poor Brahmin who made his living selling the produce of his banana garden. In order to keep the memory of Sridhara Pandit alive, the founder of the world-wide Chaitanya and Gaudiya Maths, Nitya-lila-praviṣṭa Om Vishnupada Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Prabhupada, discovered and revealed this site of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's pastimes. Deity worship was established there and it continued until after Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur's

disappearance. Now, because of problems with local people, the place is once again losing its beauty. Even so, during the Nabadwip parikrama, devotees still pay their obeisances at that spot to the memory of Sridhara Pandit.

Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur has written as follows in his Nabadvipa-dhama-mahatmya: “Sridhara Pandit’s home comes after the weavers’ neighborhood. Gauranga Mahaprabhu ended the kirtan there.” Nityananda Prabhu says the following to Jiva Goswami:

“Out of his mercy, Mahaprabhu Gauranga Hari would end the kirtan here so that the devotees could rest. It is therefore known as visrama-sthana, or the Lord’s place of rest. So let us also repose a while here at the house of Sridhara Pandit.” (Nabadwip-dhama-mahatmya)

According to this same book, there was previously a large tank near Sridhara’s banana orchard, but this too is no longer visible.

### **Sridhara’s poverty**

Material wealth and prosperity are not the truest signs of the Lord’s mercy on someone. Those who worship the gods and goddesses are generally seen to prosper materially, but one who is rich in the wealth of devotion to the Lord is the one who has truly benefited from his mercy. Mahaprabhu gave this teaching to his associates through Sridhara Pandit: a devotee of Vishnu is free from attachments to material possessions and enjoyments.

One day, the Lord went to Sridhara’s place and asked him why he was so poor. He was worshiping the husband of the goddess of fortune, Lakshmi, and yet he never had enough money for food or clothing, and his house was dilapidated. On the other hand, those who worshiped the bloodthirsty Kali always seemed to have an abundance of material wealth. Sridhara answered that a bird who made its nest in the trees and wandered from place to place to find food was passing the time of day in the same way as a king in his palace who enjoyed the best objects of gratification. There was no difference of degree or amount of pleasure experienced by the two. The Lord then said to Sridhara: “Externally, though you

appear to be poor, you are actually the true rich man. I will shortly reveal to the entire foolish world that the devotee is qualified to possess the greatest wealth, indeed they are the owners of all things.”

Generally we call that person poor or unfortunate who is deprived of wealth, possessions and a home. One who has these things is called rich or fortunate. People try to accumulate wealth in order to find happiness, and not the opposite. This happiness is the real wealth, not the external possessions, etc. Sri Krishna is the personification of happiness. Thus in actual fact, the difference between wealth and poverty: the one who has love for Krishna is rich; one who does not is poor. By way of example, during Krishna’s lila, Vidura played the part of a poor man, but one who was rich in love for Krishna. On the other hand, Duryodhana possessed unlimited riches but had no love for Krishna, and thus was truly poor. The supreme lord used Kholabeca Sridhara to show the world who was truly wealthy and fortunate. The Lord is conquered by loving devotion alone, and by nothing else.

bhaktyaham ekaya grahyaḥ sraddayatma priyaḥ satam |

bhaktiḥ punati man-niṣṭha svapakan api sambhavat ||

Being very dear to the saintly, I am only attained through devotion and unflinching faith. Devotion fixed on me purifies even a dog-eater from all faults due to low birth and circumstances such as poverty. (Srimad Bhagavatam 11.14.21)

patraṁ puṣpaṁ phalaṁ toyam yo me bhaktya prayacchati |

tad ahaṁ bhakty-upahṛtam asnami prayatatmanaḥ ||

I accept whatever anyone offers me with devotion, whether it be a leaf, a flower, a fruit or water, because of his pure consciousness. (Bhagavad-gita 6.29)

The Lord accepts whatever is given to him with devotion and eats it, but does not accept that which is given by a non-devotee. He would not accept the invitation to eat the finest, most expensive foods with Duryodhana in order to take a humble meal prepared for him by Vidura and his wife.



## **The Lord steals Sridhara's goods**

The Supreme Lord Chaitanya Mahaprabhu showed the amazing pastime of hungrily taking Sridhara's foodstuffs without even being invited to do so. While the Lord was engaged in his student pastimes, Sridhara used to make his living by selling banana flowers (moca) and the core of the banana plant (thoṛa). He would spend half of whatever little money he made in this way on worshipping the Ganges, the other half on his own necessities. Like Yudhisthira, he was a great devotee of the truth and would always tell the real price of an item he would sell. Everyone in Nabadwip knew this and so would not haggle with him. But Mahaprabhu would come to Sridhara and give him only half the amount that he was asking for his bananas, banana flowers or thoṛa and then start to walk away with them. Every day, the two of them would pull back and forth on a bunch of bananas or something else, arguing for an hour or more over the price that was to be paid.

Every day they would argue for an hour and a half; then Mahaprabhu would leave half the asked price and walk away with the goods. Sridhara would always tell the truth and give the real price of each item, but the Lord would still only give him half of the amount he asked for and then take it. Sridhara would jump up and grab the item, trying to take it back, even pushing and shoving the Lord. (Chaitanya Bhagavat 2.9.163-5)

Even though he argued with Sridhara, when he saw that he did not become angry, he would take all the goods that he was selling. Even though this is the way that it looks from a superficial point of view, the fact of the matter is that when Sridhara saw the beautiful form of the Lord, he allowed him to get away with stealing his goods without getting angry. At the sight of the Lord's beauty, he would become enchanted and immersed in an ocean of joy. While arguing with him, Mahaprabhu would call him names in great satisfaction, sometimes subtly hinting at his own divine identity:

“Every day you buy things to offer to the Ganga. Why don't you just give something to me without charging anything? Don't you know that I am the father of the Ganga that you worship. I am telling you the truth about this!”

(Chaitanya Bhagavat 2.9.178-9)

They finally came to a settlement and Sridhara agreed to daily give Mahaprabhu some bananas or other items from the banana tree for free. From then on, the Lord would daily eat with great satisfaction from the little bowls made of banana bark that had been given to him by Sridhara.

The Lord said, “Alright, alright. There is no necessity for anything else.” And from that day on, he ate with great contentment on banana leaves given him by Sridhara. The Lord thus eats anything that the devotee offers him, but he rejects even rich items given him by a non-devotee. (Chaitanya Bhagavat 2.9.184-6)

### **Sridhara blessed at the maha-prakasa**

On that eventful night when the Lord sat on the altar in Srivasa’s home and revealed his divine form to his devotees for 21 hours, showing them all the different incarnations of Vishnu, one after the other, he told them to bring Sridhara there also. Sridhara would regularly stay up the whole night chanting the Holy Names and calling out to the Lord. This was a source of happiness to the devotees, but the non-devotees would complain that he was keeping them awake with his noise and they would regularly criticize and rebuke him. As the devotees were going to his house on the Lord’s order, they could hear him chanting loudly from a considerable distance prior to arriving.

When he came to Srivasa Angan, Sridhara beheld the glorious divine form of the Lord and fell to the ground in a faint. He was brought back to consciousness by the Lord’s voice and then, with the power that was given him through the Lord’s mercy, began to recite hymns of glorification. Satisfied with Sridhara’s hymns of praise, Mahaprabhu wished to give him the eight mystic powers<sup>1083</sup>The eight mystic powers or siddhis are listed in the Narada-pancaratra: *aṇima laghima vyaptiḥ prakamya mahima tatha / isitvaṁ ca vāsitaṁ ca tatha kamavasayita //* Three of these mystic powers are physical: becoming very small (*aṇima*), light (*laghima*) or large (*mahima*); *vyapti* means to possess the powers of the tutelary deities of the senses; *prakamya* is the power to do anything within the scope of the material nature; *isitva* is the perfection through which one can control the

maya energy; vasita is the perfection of detachment from sense enjoyment; kamavasayita is the power to be able to enjoy anything that one can imagine through his desires.<sup>1083</sup> as a benediction, but Sridhara refused, saying that he only wanted service to the Lord's lotus feet.

Lord Vishvambhara repeatedly urged Sridhara to ask for a boon. Finally Sridhara said, "Lord, if you must give me something, then I ask for this. May that Brahmin who used to pinch my banana leaves and bark be my lord, lifetime after lifetime. May that Brahmin who used to argue with me be my master, and I serve his lotus feet." (Chaitanya Bhagavat 2.9.223-5)

Who can recognize all these servants of the Lord who want neither wealth, nor followers, nor even scholarship. Of what use are learning, wealth, beauty, fame or high birth? All of these things simply increase one's pride and are ultimately valueless. A millionaire may try for millions of eons to achieve what Sridhara did, simply by selling bananas and banana products, and still not be able to do so. (Chaitanya Bhagavat 2.9.233-5)

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur comments on these verses as follows: "Through empirical knowledge or external analysis, no one can recognize the true character of a devotee. It should not be thought that the ability to collect great amounts of money is a function of devotion, nor that someone who is able to accumulate a great number of followers is a better Vaishnava than someone who cannot. Furthermore, if someone is a great religious scholar, this does not mean that he is a devotee of the Lord. A servant of Sri Chaitanya might have very little money, may show no signs of having a great number of followers, and may have no talent for argument or debate, and ordinary people are unable to understand why he is indifferent to these externals. These devotees consider service to Sri Chaitanya to be something more valuable than the accumulation of wealth, followers or learning. Thus, there is no possibility of the depth of their wisdom, their glories and their superiority being perceived by the general public."

Who is capable of recognizing a devotee? He may possess all perfections, but we see only his poverty. The seller of banana products, Sridhara Pandit, is a living example of this. He disregarded the eight mystic perfections in order to simply accept devotion as a benediction. However much misery you see in a devotee's life, you should know that in fact he is enjoying divine pleasure in devotional service. Those who are absorbed in sense gratification and intoxicated by

learning or wealth can never recognize a Vaishnava. (Chaitanya Bhagavat 2.9.238-41)

### **Mahaprabhu drinks from Sridhara's waterpot**

When Mahaprabhu was leading the sankirtan party after having delivered Chand Kazi, he returned through the quarter of the conch shell merchants and that of the weavers to arrive finally at Sridhara Pandit's house. He then took a long drink of water from Sridhara's old, beaten iron water pot. When Sridhara saw Mahaprabhu do this, he was mortified and fell unconscious.

Mahaprabhu's action was meant to teach us that by drinking a devotee's water, we can attain devotion. He wanted to show that the water from a devotee's water jug, even though it is old and rusty, is still like nectar to the Supreme Lord himself. By way of contrast, He ignores the proud non-devotee's water, even when offered in a jeweled goblet.

When the Lord saw Sridhara's tumbledown shack of a home from a distance, he laughed quietly from the inner joy he felt. He led the company of devotees along the path to Sridhara's hut, where he spotted an iron water pot full of holes. There was still a little water in it, and the Lord drank it thirstily. The Lord is bhakta-vatsala, ever affectionate toward his devotees, and this act overwhelmed him with feelings of love. Tears poured from his eyes like the currents of the Ganga, and a wonderful kirtan began in Sridhara's courtyard in which all the devotees led by Nityananda and Advaita Prabhus were crying. Ah, when I think of the great joy they all experienced on that day here at Sridhara's house, my heart is torn. (Bhakti-ratnakara 12.3136-41)

The Lord drank water from Sridhara's iron water pot and he fulfilled the desires of every single devotee. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 1.17.70)

On the very day before he took sannyas, Mahaprabhu happily accepted a gift of a gourd from Sridhara. Sachi Mata cooked the gourd with milk, making one of the Lord's favorite preparations.

The pious Sridhara came to see the Lord carrying a gourd (lau). When Gaurasundara saw the gift he laughed and asked, “Where did you get it?” But he knew that he would be leaving the next day and would not be able to eat it then. But he did not want to see the gift go unused and so he determined to have it prepared that very day. (Chaitanya Bhagavat 2.28.33-6)

After taking sannyas, Mahaprabhu wandered in the land of Rarha for three days in a intoxicated state of love for Krishna until Nityananda tricked him to coming to Shantipur to Advaita Acharya’s house. When the Lord met Sachi Mata and the other Nabadwip devotees, he also met with Sridhara. Sridhara came every year to Puri to meet with the Lord at the time of the Rathayatra.

## **Sri Vakresvara Pandit**

vyuhas turyo’niruddho yaḥ sa vakresvara-pañḍitaḥ /

kṛṣṇavesaja-nṛtyena prabhoḥ sukham ajijanat //

sahasra-gayakan mahyaṁ dehi tvaṁ karuṇa-maya /

iti caitanya-pade sa uvaca madhuraṁ vacaḥ /

sva-prakasa-vibhedena sasirekha tam avisat //

Vakresvara Pandit is the fourth member of the catur-vyuha, Aniruddha. He brought happiness to the lord by dancing in the mood of Krishna. He would sweetly say to Mahaprabhu, “O merciful lord! Give me a thousand singers so that I can dance.” Radha’s dear sakhi Sasirekha also entered into him. (Gaura-gaṇoddesa-dipika 71)

Sri Vakresvara Pandit revealed such great potency that he danced non-stop for three days. Krishnadas Kaviraj Goswami wrote the following about Vakresvara Pandit:

Vakresvara Pandit is the Lord's dear servant, who danced without rest for seventy-two hours. Mahaprabhu himself sang as he danced when Vakresvara fell down at his feet and said, "O moon-faced lord! Give me ten thousand Gandharvas. I will be happy if I can dance while they sing. The Lord answered, "You are like a wing. If I had another like you, I would be able to fly in the sky!" (Chaitanya Charitamrita 1.10.17-20)

## **Vakresvara and Devananda Pandit**

He was also present at the houses of Srivasa and Chandrasekhara, where he would also dance during kirtan. Vakresvara was so dear to Mahaprabhu that when Devananda Pandit was able to receive Mahaprabhu's mercy by serving him. In this way he was able to become free of the offenses he had made to Srivasa Pandit. Mahaprabhu explained how to atone for offenses to the Vaishnavas in answer to a Brahmin's question.

Listen, Brahmin, if someone eats poison then he must take ambrosia through the very same mouth. Then the poison will be digested and the body will become immortal by the power of the divine ambrosia. Now let me answer your question. Whatever blasphemies you have unknowingly made are exactly like poison which you have eaten. Now you must use the same mouth to constantly glorify Krishna's name and qualities, which are like ambrosia. You have used this mouth to insult the devotees, now use it to glorify them. Glorify the devotees as the best of humanity, glorify them in songs and poetry. I will destroy all the poison of blasphemy through the ambrosia of the ecstasies of Krishna's glories. You have all unknowingly committed offenses; this is the truth. If you should stop all kinds of offensive activity and simply engage in praising Krishna and his devotees, then you will be free from all the sins you have committed, however numerous they may be. You will not be able to achieve the same results by millions of atonements. (Chaitanya Bhagavat 3.3.449-458)

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur comments: "An offensive person will only attain auspiciousness if he uses the mouth through which he made his blasphemous comments to acknowledge his offense and then to glorify Krishna and his devotees. If you take poison it will disrupt the body's

functioning, but you can remedy the situation by taking a medicine that destroys its effects. Similarly, the way to become free from the poisonous effects of Vaishnava-ninda is to first of all stop; then, rather than performing thousands of other ineffective atonement rituals, one should glorify the Vaishnava.

“Through serving the devotee, Kuliya’s Devananda Pandit became a believer in Mahaprabhu’s lotus feet. This good fortune visited him when Vakresvara came to stay in his house. Devananda was a follower of the smarta path, but was nevertheless a great scholar and very renounced. He read no scripture other than the Bhagavatam. He was devoted to the Supreme Lord and was free from the domination of his senses. Nevertheless, he was not a believer in Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. By Vakresvara’s mercy, this foolish misunderstanding was dispelled and he developed faith in the lord.”(Gauḍiya-bhaṣya to Chaitanya Bhagavat 3.3.453, 481)

Vakresvara Pandit was very dear to Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. Anyone who remembers him will purify the entire creation. He is the embodiment of Krishna prema and the gods and the demons would all become enchanted by his dancing. (Chaitanya Bhagavat 3.3.469-70)

Mahaprabhu himself described Vakresvara’s glories to Devananda Pandit:

The Lord said, “You have served Vakresvara, therefore I have come to know you. Vakresvara Pandit is the Lord’s complete energy and whoever pays homage to him attains Krishna. Krishna has made his home in Vakresvara’s heart. Krishna dances in order to make Vakresvara dance. If any place becomes associated with Vakresvara, it immediately becomes the equivalent of Vaikuntha and equal to all the holy places. (Chaitanya Bhagavat 3.3.493-6)

When Mahaprabhu had absolved Devananda of his offenses, then he instructed him with great affection. Those vain egoists who are proud of their scholarship cannot understand the meaning of the Bhagavatam; that is the prerogative of those who are surrendered, the saraṇagata. The only object of the Bhagavatam is to elucidate pure devotion; it is not different from the pure devotee. One is the book Bhagavatam, the other is the person Bhagavatam. One who speaks from the Bhagavatam with this knowledge will attain the supreme auspiciousness.

One who thinks, “I understand the Bhagavatam” does not really know the

Bhagavatam's central meaning. On the other hand, an ignorant person who takes shelter of the Bhagavatam will directly perceive its meaning. The Bhagavatam is pure love, it is the incarnation of Krishna himself. It recounts Krishna's most intimate activities. After recounting the Vedas and the Puranas, Vedavyasa felt unsatisfied, but as soon as the Bhagavatam manifested on his tongue, his mind was immediately satisfied. (Chaitanya Bhagavat 3.3.514-8)

## **Gopal Guru Goswami**

When Vakresvara came to live at Puri, he would accompany Mahaprabhu, Advaita Acharya and other devotees to Tota Gopinath to hear Gadadhara Pandit give discourses on the Bhagavatam. One should hear the book Bhagavatam from the devotee Bhagavatam.

Gopal Guru Goswami was Vakresvara Pandit's disciple. Gopal Guru's previous name was Makaradhvaja Pandit; his father's name was Murari Pandit. It is said that Gopal Guru also displayed extraordinary powers. In his childhood, Gopal Guru personally served Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. When Abhirama Thakur came to pay him obeisances, Mahaprabhu took him on his lap to protect him. Mahaprabhu gave Gopal the name Guru because he instructed people to chant Krishna's names in all circumstances, whether pure or impure.

Before leaving his body, Gopal Guru turned over the service of his Krishnakanta deity to his disciple, Dhyanachandra Goswami. After his death, when Gopal Guru's body was taken to the Svarga-dvara to be cremated, some representatives of the king came and closed the Radhakanta Math. Dhyanachandra was so distressed that he began to cry aloud. Gopal Guru arose from the funeral pyre, returned to Radhakanta's temple and resolved the problem before going back to the crematorium. Even after that, however, Gopal Guru appeared in Vrindavan, where devotees were amazed to witness him engaged in his devotions. A murti of Gopal Guru is still worshiped at Radhakanta Math. Most of Vakresvara Pandit's disciples' descendants in Orissa consider themselves to be Gaudiya Vaishnavas.

During Rathayatra at Puri, Vakresvara was the chief dancer in the fourth kirtan



sampradaya whose lead singer was Govinda Ghosh. He is sometimes described as a branch of Chaitanya, or as a branch of Gadadhara Pandit.

Vakresvara's disappearance day is the sixth day of the waxing moon in the month of Asharh.

## **Sri Devananda Pandit**

purāṇanam artha-vetta sri devananda-pañḍitaḥ /

purasin nanda-pariṣat-pañḍito bhaṇḍarir muniḥ //

The scholar Devananda Pandit knew the meaning of all the Puranas. Previously, he was Bhandari Muni, the scholar in Nanda Maharaj's court. (Gaura-gaṇoddesa-dipika 106)

Mahaprabhu went to the dyke of Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya's father, Mahesvara Visharada. Devananda Pandit's house was situated there. He was a peaceful Brahmin who desired mokṣa, liberation. (Chaitanya Bhagavat 2.21.6-7)

The Lord delivered Devananda Pandit in the town of Kuliya. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.1.153)

According to Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Prabhupada, Kuliya was a suburb of Nabadwip situated on the west bank of the Ganges. In that time, the central part of the town of Nabadwip, i.e., Mayapur, was situated on the eastern bank of the river. The modern city of Nabadwip is on the site of the former Kuliya, which is also called "the place where offenses are forgiven" (aparadha-bhanjaner paṭa). Proof of this is found in many of the old names of neighborhoods, such as Koler Ganj, Koler Daha, Gadkhali Kol, etc. (Gauḍiya-bhaṣya to Chaitanya Bhagavat 2.9.98)

Each of the nine islands of Nabadwip Dhama represents one of the nine types of devotional service. Koladvipa is the island of service to the Lord's lotus feet

(padasevana). The word kola has been distorted into the popular speech as kuliya.

Just look--this is Visharada's embankment. Here the Lord met Devananda Pandit. He chastised him for the offense he had committed to Srivasa Pandit, which caused him to repent. (Bhakti-ratnakara 12.2976-7)

From the above evidence from Chaitanya Bhagavat, Chaitanya Charitamrita and Bhakti-ratnakara, it is clear that Devananda Pandit's house, was somewhere near to the house of Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya's father, Mahesvara Visharada. It is thus clearly indicated that his school (ṭol) was situated somewhere in Kuliya village.

### **Devananda's offense**

Devananda Pandit was a scholar, an ascetic who was indifferent to the world from an early age. Although he had a reputation for being erudite, he nevertheless had no feeling for devotion to Krishna and so failed to understand that bhakti was the ultimate purport of the Srimad Bhagavatam. Being a mumukṣu, or one who seeks impersonal liberation, mokṣa, Devananda Pandit praised dry austerities and renunciation, and did not glorify devotional service in his discourses on the Bhagavatam.

One day, Srivasa Pandit came to hear a Bhagavatam recital at Devananda's house. As he listened to the text of the Bhagavatam, Srivasa Pandit became absorbed in a mood of loving devotion and started to cry. Devananda Pandit's faithless disciples threw him out of the assembly for causing a disturbance. Since Devananda did not object to the action of his students, he was responsible for an offense to a devotee. For this reason, Mahaprabhu was angry with him.

The Lord says: "Whoever recites the Bhagavatam without glorifying devotional service is an ignorant fool who knows nothing. This rascal recites the Bhagavatam and never mentions bhakti. I will go and tear up his manuscript, just watch me. (Chaitanya Bhagavat 2.21.20-21)

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur comments on this verse as follows: “When those who are bereft of devotional service forget their actual identity, they become completely indifferent to such service. When they identify this indifference as the ultimate goal of life, they become a source of profound irritation to the Lord, even though he is by nature supremely merciful. Here he reveals that irritation and informs us that this attitude of the non-devotee is not only unnecessary but detestable. He also indicates that both the acts of enjoying and renouncing the fruits of material actions are improper. The devotees find great satisfaction in seeing the Lord become angry in this way.”

### **Devananda gains faith in the Lord**

Some time after Devananda Pandit committed this offense to Srivasa Pandit, Mahaprabhu passed nearby his house and saw that he was engaged in giving a discourse on the Bhagavatam. He became angry and rebuked him severely for his lack of faith in the Vaishnavas. Just as blasphemy of the devotees is the best way to be deprived of the Lord’s mercy and destined for downfall, one can seek out the mercy of the Lord and become freed from all one’s sinful activities by glorifying the devotees and engaging in their service.

“Listen, Brahmin, if someone eats poison then he must take ambrosia through the very same mouth to counteract it. Then the poison will be digested and the body will become immortal by the power of the divine ambrosia.” (Chaitanya Bhagavat 2.3.449-50)

It was through great good fortune that Mahaprabhu’s dear associate, Vakresvara Pandit came to stay at Devananda Pandit’s house. Because Devananda took excellent care of Vakresvara, Mahaprabhu softened towards him. Previously, Devananda had been completely without any faith in the Lord, but when he heard of Mahaprabhu’s glories from the mouth of Vakresvara, his attitude changed. Through the association of the Lord’s devotee, he began to develop a taste for pure devotional service.

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur writes in this regard, “For Devananda Pandit of Kuliya, the fruit of service to the Vaishnava was faith in

Mahaprabhu’s lotus feet. Vakresvara Pandit’s visit to his house was the source of auspiciousness. Although he was a Smarta, Devananda Pandit was a great scholar and self-controlled. He studied nothing but the Srimad Bhagavatam. He believed in God and had control of his senses, but was only lacking faith in Mahaprabhu. By the grace of Vakresvara Pandit, this faulty intelligence was wiped away and he became a believer in Lord Chaitanya.”

Devananda was a scholar of the Bhagavatam, but it was through the mercy of Vakresvara that he was able to understand the meaning of the Bhagavatam from Mahaprabhu. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 1.10.77)

Mahaprabhu told Devananda to explain the Bhagavatam in terms of devotional service. It was Devananda Pandit’s great fortune that he was able to receive the mercy of the Lord in the form of a chastisement.

Even so, Devananda Pandit was a great pious soul, for Mahaprabhu verbally punished him. The chastisement of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu is the greatest puṇya. Even if one should die from his punishment, he still goes to Vaikuntha. (Chaitanya Bhagavat 2.21.77-8)

Devananda received this mercy due to living in Kuliya or Koladvipa, the place where offenses are forgiven. Gopal Chapala was also forgiven his offenses in Kuliya.

His disappearance day is celebrated on the kṛṣṇa ekadasi of the month of Paush.

## **The Ghosh brothers**

kalavati rasollasa guṇatuṅga vraje sthitah |

sri-visakha-kṛtaṁ gitam gayanti smadya ta matah |

govinda-madhavananda-vasudeva yatha-kramam ||

Govinda, Madhava and Vasudeva were three gopis in Vraja, namely Kalavati, Rasollasa and Guṇatunga, who used to sing the songs composed by Vishakha. (Gaura-gaṇoddesa-dipika 188)

These three brothers were born in an upper class kayastha family from northern Rarha. All three were singers famed for the sweetness of their voices.

The meritorious Madhava Ghosh devoted himself to kirtan. There was no singer on earth who was his equal. It was said of him that he was a singer from Vrindavan. He was most dear to Nityananda Prabhu. The three brothers, Govinda, Madhava and Vasudeva began to sing while Lord Nityananda danced. (Chaitanya Bhagavat 3.5.257-9)

Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and Nityananda Prabhu danced to the kirtan of the three brothers, Govinda, Madhava and Vasudeva. (Chaitanya Bhagavat 1.15.115)

When Nityananda returned to Gauḍadesa to preach, he was accompanied by Vasudeva and Madhava Ghosh. Meanwhile Govinda remained in Nilachala with Mahaprabhu.

## **Govinda Ghosh**

Govinda is counted amongst the branches of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu (Chaitanya Charitamrita 1.10.118). Eventually, he made his home in Agradvipa, Vasudeva in Tamluk, and Madhava Ghosh in Dain Hat.<sup>1094</sup> Agradvipa and Dain Hat are villages lying between Nabadwip and Katwa, while Tamluk is in Mednipur.<sup>1094</sup> Govinda Ghosh Thakur's house is not far from Agradvipa in Kashipura Vishnutala. Some are of the opinion that Vaiṣṇavatala was his birthplace. Govinda Ghosh participated in Mahaprabhu's lilas in Srivasa Angan, in the nagara-sankirtan to the Kazi's house, and in the house of Raghava Pandit. During the Rathayatra festival, he was the lead singer in the fourth kirtan group, accompanied by his two brothers, Junior Hari Das, Vishnu Das and Raghava Pandit. Vakresvara Pandit joined this group as the principal dancer.

On Mahaprabhu's direction, Govinda revealed the Gopinath deity from a black stone in Agradvipa. Mahaprabhu also instructed him to get married. The story goes that Govinda Ghosh's wife and son both died untimely. As he grew older, Govinda began to wonder who would perform the last rites for him, as it is considered important for one to have a son who can do the sraddha ceremony on his behalf. He had a dream in which Gopinath appeared to him and said, "Don't worry about this. I will perform the sraddha ceremony for you myself."

When Govinda Ghosh finally died, Gopinath offered the piṇḍa on his behalf. Gopinath continues to perform this ceremony every year on the anniversary of Govinda Ghosh's departure from this world. This takes place on the kṛṣṇa trayodasi of the month of Chaitra. Vasudeva Ghosh's disappearance day is on the second day of the waxing moon in the month of Karttik.

### **Two songs written by Govinda Ghosh**

praṇera mukunda he!

ki aji sunilu acambite?

kahite paraṇa jaya      mukhe nahi bahiraya

sri gauraṅga charibe navadvipa ||

ihato na jani mo      rasakale milinuṅ gora

avanata mathe ache basi |

nijhare nayana jhare      buka bahi dhara paṛe

malina haiyache mukha sasi ||

dekhite takhana praṇa      sada kare ana cana

sudhaite nahi avasara |

kṣaṇeka sambita haila      tabe mui nivedila  
suniya dilena e uttara ||  
ami ta vivasa haiya    tare kichu na kahiya  
dhaiya ailuñ tuwa pasa |  
ei ta kahiluñ amije      karite para tumi  
mora nahi jivanera asa ||  
suniya mukunda kande    hiya thira nahi bandhe  
gadadharera vadana heriya |  
e govinda ghoṣa kaya    iha jena nahi haya  
tabe muni jainu mariya ||

O Mukunda! My life! What did I suddenly hear today?

If I say it I will die... the words do not want to come out of my mouth. Gauranga is really going to leave Nabadwip.

We didn't know this, but we saw Gora this morning; he was sitting with his head bowed in thought. Streams of tears flowed from his eyes and washed over his chest, and his moon-like face had lost its luster.

When we saw him like that, our own hearts fluttered and we could not ask him anything. For a moment I regained consciousness and humbly asked him the question and that is what he told me.

Becoming disturbed, I ran here to you right away without saying anything further to him. I have told you this and now do what you can. As far as we are concerned, I don't think that we have any hope of continuing to live.

When he heard this, Mukunda started to cry. He could no longer keep his calm as he looked at Gadadhara. Govinda Ghosh says, Let it not be, for if he leaves, I

will die.

“““

hede re nadiya vasi kara mukha cao |  
bahu pasariya goracañde phirao ||  
to sabare ke ara karibe nija kore |  
ke jaciya dibe prema dekhiya katara ||  
ki sela hiyaya haya ki sel hiyaya |  
paraṇa putali nabadvipa chaṛi jaya ||  
ara na jaiba mora gaurāṅgera pasa |  
ara na kariba mora kirtana vilasa ||  
kañdaye bhakata-gaṇa buka vidariya |  
paṣaṇa govinda ghoṣa na jaya miliya ||

O people of Nabadwip, at whom are you staring?  
Spread your arms to stop Gora, make him come back!  
Who is there now who will clasp you to his chest?  
Who will come and beg you to take love of Krishna?  
A shaft has pierced my heart! A shaft has pierced my heart!  
The image of my life has abandoned Nabadwip and gone.



No longer will we be able to go and sit with Gauranga;  
no longer will we be able to enjoy kirtan the way we did.  
All the devotees are crying; their hearts are bursting  
and, like a stone, Govinda Ghosh does not go to join them.

## **Sri Vishnupriya Devi**

sri-sanatana-misro'yaṁ pura satrajito nṛpaḥ |  
viṣṇupriya jagan-mata yat-kanya bhu-svarupīṇi ||

He who was King Satrajit in Krishna lila was Sanatan Mishra in Chaitanya lila. The mother of the universe, the incarnation of the Lord's bhu-sakti, is his daughter Vishnupriya. (Gaura-gaṇoddesa-dipika 47)

Krishna married Satyabhama, the daughter of King Satrajit and a Yadu princess. In Gaura lila, this same Satrajit became Sanatan Mishra and she became Vishnupriya Devi. All manifestations of Vishnu tattva have three energies, known as Sri, Bhu and Nila (or Lila). Lakshmipriya Devi is the sri-sakti of Mahaprabhu in his majestic Gaura-Narayan attitude; Vishnupriya is his bhu-sakti and Nabadwip Dham is his lila-sakti. Srila Gadadhara Pandit Goswami is the sakti of Gaura-Krishna, or Mahaprabhu in the mood of Krishna.

Knowledge is of two kinds, apara vidya or material knowledge, and para vidya, or transcendental knowledge. Vishnupriya Devi is the personification of transcendental knowledge. Devotees worship her on her appearance day on the sukla pancami of the month of Magh. On the same day, those materialistic persons who are seeking the perfection of knowledge of this world worship the goddess of learning, Saraswati.

Vishnupriya Devi's grandfather was Durga Das Mishra. Some people believe that Durga Das was Vishnupriya's father. In the Prema-vilasa, the family of Durga Das Mishra's descendants through Yadavacharya is known as

Vishnupriya's parivara.

## **Mahaprabhu's marriage to Vishnupriya Devi**

Vrindavan Das Thakur describes the birth of Gaura-Narayan's sakti, Vishnupriya Devi, in his Chaitanya Bhagavat. Krishnadas Kaviraj Goswami has also mentioned the event in his Chaitanya Charitamrita.

In the Adikhaṇḍa, the death of Mahaprabhu's first wife is described, and then his second marriage to the daughter of the court pandit. (Chaitanya Bhagavat 1.1.110)

Then he was married to Vishnupriya Thakurani, after which he defeated the Digvijayi Pandit. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 1.16.25)

For the materialistic person, the marriage of a man and woman is the source of bondage. When the Lord marries in imitation of ordinary mortals, it becomes a something quite different: it is a transcendental affair. By chanting and hearing about the union of the Supreme Lord with his divine energy, one is liberated from the material energy.

Whoever hears about the holy pastime of the Lord's marriage will be liberated from his bondage to this world. Lakshmi sat beside the Lord and the house of Sachi was filled with light. (Chaitanya Bhagavat 1.10.110-1)

Whoever saw the Lord's effulgent form on that day was freed from his or her sins and went to Vaikuntha. This is why the Lord is known as the merciful lord of the fallen. (Chaitanya Bhagavat 1.15.216-7)

Mahaprabhu spent an inordinate time absorbed in teaching his students on a trip to eastern Bengal, and Lakshmipriya Devi found it impossible to support his absence. So, meditating on his lotus feet, she departed from this world. When Mahaprabhu finally arrived back in Nabadwip, he consoled his mother who was deeply affected by the loss of her daughter-in-law. Sachi Mata then started looking for another wife for her son and consulted Kashinatha Pandit for that

purpose. Kashinatha was a well-known matchmaker who is described in Gauraganoddesa-dipika (50) as having been the Brahmin in Krishna lila named Kulaka who was sent by Satrajit to arrange the marriage between his daughter Satyabhama and Krishna. He then went to the court pandit Sanatan Mishra to arrange the marriage between Mahaprabhu and his daughter, the devotionally minded Vishnupriya. Kashinatha said the following to Sanatan Mishra:

“Give your daughter to Vishvambhara Pandit; it is a perfect combination. She alone is worthy of such a divine husband, while he deserves such a pious and chaste wife. Just as Krishna and Rukmini were worthy of each other, so are Vishnupriya and Nimai Pandit.” (Chaitanya Bhagavat 1.15.57-59)

From her early childhood, Vishnupriya Devi was always devoted to her parents and to Vishnu, taking her bath in the Ganges three times daily. She regularly saw mother Sachi there, paying obeisances and being blessed by her. In this way, Sachi already knew Vishnupriya’s good qualities, and so was happy to agree to accept her as a wife for her son.

Buddhimanta Khan was a rich and wise friend of Nimai’s family who volunteered to bear the entire expense of his marriage. Once it had been decided that Vishnupriya and Vishvambhara would be married, an auspicious day and moment were fixed for the ceremony. With great pomp, the adhivasa rituals were carried out on the eve of the marriage. The Lord arrived at Sanatan Mishra’s house in a palanquin at dusk and Gaura and Vishnupriya’s wedding ceremony was performed according to both scriptural and popular traditions.

On the following day, Vishnupriya joined her new husband on the palanquin and returned with him to his house. If one hears the eternal pastime of the wedding of Lakshmi and Narayan, then he loses his desire for the material relationship of enjoyer and enjoyed, for one comes to understand that Narayan alone is the supreme enjoyer of the entire universe. Buddhimanta Khan was fulfilled by receiving Mahaprabhu’s embrace and mercy. Vrindavan Das Thakur has further written the following about the wedding:

Some people of the pious women said, “They remind me of Gauri and Shiva.” Others said, “It seems that they are Lakshmi and Narayan.” Yet others said, “No, they rather resemble Rati and Kamadeva.” Some compared them to Indra and Sachi, and others to Rama and Sita. (Chaitanya Bhagavat 1.15.205-8)

## **Vishnupriya Devi after Nimai's sannyas**

When Mahaprabhu left home to go to Katwa and take sannyas, he was only 24 years old. Lochan Das Thakur has described Vishnupriya's terrible feelings of separation in the days that followed his departure in the Chaitanya Maṅgala:

The earth splits from the sound of Vishnupriya's crying: the birds and beasts, even the trees and stones shed tears when they heard it. Falling to the ground she would lament, crying out "Why does my sinful life not end?" In separation, her breath was like fire, drying her lips and her body trembled constantly. (Cm 2.14.15-6)

The Advaita-prakasa also describes how Vishnupriya lived her life in terrible separation from the Lord after his departure. Every morning, she would go for her bath in the Ganges with mother Sachi, after which she spent the entire day inside the house, never allowing the moon or the sun to see her form. Not even the devotees were allowed to see anything more than her feet, nor would anyone ever hear her voice. Constantly shedding tears and eating only Mother Sachi's remnants, she became pale and thin. She took intense delight in the Holy Name, chanting all day long in solitude before a portrait of Gauranga, serving it as though he were present in it and surrendering herself to his lotus feet. In this way, she demonstrated the ideal character of a devoted wife as well as the forbearance spoken of by the Lord in his verse, *ṭṛṇad api sunicena taror iva sahiṣṇuna*, etc.

Srinivas Acharya received Vishnupriya Devi's blessing. He personally witnessed her devotion to Mahaprabhu in separation. Narahari Chakravarti has described this in his Bhakti-ratnakara:

Every day Srinivas would come to see her. He observed her daily activities, which are beyond description. She had completely renounced sleep, and if ever she closed her eyes, it would be while lying on the bare ground. Her bodily luster, which had formerly glowed more brilliantly than gold, had become dull and she was as thin as the waning moon on its fourteenth day. She set aside grains of rice to count the Holy Names she chanted, and would cook only this

rice and offer it to her Lord. Of this amount, she would only eat a small portion. No one understood how she could remain alive. (Bhakti-ratnakara 4.47-51)

Jahnava Devi's disciple Nityananda Das has also described the standard Vishnupriya Devi set for bhajan in his Prema-vilasa.

Listen, brothers, to the way which Isvari Vishnupriya would take the names of the Lord. By listening to this, you will get a feeling for the lila. Every day she would place two clay pots on either side of her, one filled with uncooked rice, the other empty. Each time she completed one mantra of sixteen names and thirty-two syllables, she would joyfully place a grain of rice into the empty container. She would chant in this way until three o'clock in the afternoon, and then would take whatever rice had accumulated and cook it. This is the only food that she prepared, drenching it with her tears before she offered it to the Lord.

It is not possible to estimate how many names Mahaprabhu himself chanted, but he chanted all day and night. Similarly, his beloved wife Vishnupriya chanted incessantly through the day and the night. Such dedication to the Holy Name was not impossible for her, for the Lord had planted the seed of his power in her.

It is said that Vishnupriya Devi was the first to establish worship of a murti of Gauranga. This has been stated in Murari Gupta's karaca:

prakasa-rupeṇa nija-priyayaḥ  
samipam asadya nijaṁ hi murtim |  
vidhaya tasyaṁ sthita eṣa kṛṣṇaḥ  
sa lakṣmi-rupa ca niṣevate prabhum ||

Krishna came to his beloved wife in this expansion form to remain by her side as the Mahaprabhu deity. Thus she, the incarnation of the goddess of fortune, was able to serve him constantly.

The devotees of Mahaprabhu sometimes said that just as Ramachandra, who had taken the vow of monogamy, performed a sacrifice to a golden Sita that he had

had made during his exile in the forest rather than marry a second time, so Vishnupriya repaid her debt to her Lord in the pastimes of Gaura-Narayan by having an image of Mahaprabhu created so she could perform the sacrifice of the Holy Name to him. This deity is still present and worshiped in Nabadwip.

Sri Vamsivadana Thakur and Ishan Thakur were blessed by the service of taking care of Vishnupriya Devi and Sachi Devi after Mahaprabhu took sannyas.

## **Sri Ishan Thakur**

Ishan Thakur is counted as one of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's branches:

Srinath Mishra, Subhananda, Sri Rama, Ishan, Srinidhi, Sri Gopikanta, Bhagavan Mishra [were branches of Chaitanya's tree]. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 1.10.110)

Ishan Thakur<sup>1105</sup>Other than this Ishan, there were several other associates of the Lord who had the same name. (1) Sanatan Goswami's servant was named Ishan. (2) There was a devotee in Vrindavan of that name. He is mentioned in the Bhakti-ratnakara as a member of the party of devotees who accompanied Rupa Goswami to the house of Vitthalesvara to have darshan of Govardhanadhari Gopal. He also is said to have blessed Srinivas Acharya, Narottama Das Thakur and Shyamananda Prabhu when they started their voyage to Bengal with the Goswamis' books. (3) In the Gaudiya Vaisnava Abhidhana, there is mention of a certain Ishan Acharya who is identified as Vraja's Yauna Manjari. (4) The author of the Advaita-Prakasa was named Ishan Nagara.<sup>1105</sup> was Jagannath Mishra's household servant. Only an eternal associate of the Supreme Lord could have the good fortune to render him personal service in his own home. The Lord accepts the service of his own confidential associates. When Mahaprabhu was born, Ishan had the chance to take the Lord on his lap and to hold him affectionately. He tolerated all of little Nimai's childhood pranks and answered his every whim. Nimai was unable to go without Ishan for even a moment.

How can I understand the activities of Ishan Thakur, whom Nimai used to lovingly call “father”? The son of Sachi, Nimai Chand, was his very life and Nimai would not go anywhere without him. In his childhood, Nimai was very naughty and he would make all kinds of capricious demands that Ishan would do his best to fulfill. (Bhakti-ratnakara 12.95-7)

Ishan Thakur also had the chance to serve Nityananda Prabhu, Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu’s other self. Before the two sat down to eat in Sachi’s house, Ishan Thakur would bring water to wash their feet. The Lord would plea with his mother to be able to invite Nitai and when she finally agreed would go himself to invite him.

Ishan gave water for Gaura and Nitai to wash their feet and then they sat down to eat. (Chaitanya Bhagavat 2.8.59)

As one of the Lord’s eternal associates, Ishan Thakur was fully aware of his divine nature. He knew that the worship of the devotee is more important than even the worship of the Lord himself. Thus he performed all kinds of service to Sachi Devi, who is none other than Yashoda Devi and was blessed by her affection. The Lord too blesses his devotees through his devotee’s merciful attitude. The Lord’s mercy follows upon the mercy of the devotee. Ishan Thakur glories are described in the work known as the Vaishnava-vandana:

vandiba isana-dasa kara-jora kari /

saci-ṭhakuraṇi yare sneha kaila vaṛi //

I pay obeisances to Ishan Das with folded hands, for Sachi Thakurani was very affectionate towards him. (Bhakti-ratnakara 12.94)

The Brahmin said, “Look, here comes Ishan. What can I say, no one really understands his great qualifications. He has the reputation of knowing all the truths about the Lord, and he served Sachi by doing whatever she needed having done. Because he rendered such service to the Lord’s mother, Ishan is uniquely fortunate in the fourteen worlds. Even though I saw with my own eyes how much affection she had for him, I am unable to find the words to describe it. (Bhakti-ratnakara 12.90-3)”

Ishan, most fortunate in the fourteen worlds, served the Lord's mother constantly. (Chaitanya Bhagavat 2.8.74)

When Mahaprabhu took sannyas and left for Puri, Ishan was left with the responsibility of taking care of his mother Sachi and his wife Vishnupriya Devi and supervising their household. In his commentary to the Chaitanya Bhagavat (2.8.73), where it is said that Ishan Thakur did all the cleaning of the house, etc., Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur writes: "Ishan was the servant in Mahaprabhu's house. He gathered up the rice that had been thrown all over [by Nityananda] and made the house proper. There was no limit to Ishan's good fortune. He was able to render service to the Lord's mother throughout his entire life. Even after the Lord took sannyas, he was engaged in the service of the Lord's mother and his wife, showing the extent of the blessings he had received. He is therefore described as 'most blessed' or 'the most fortunate amongst the blessed.'"

Ishan Thakur lived a very long life. He was still living even after the disappearance of Vishnupriya Devi and all the other devotees of Mahaprabhu in Nabadwip. Thus when Srinivas Acharya, Narottama Thakur and Ramachandra Kaviraj came to Nabadwip on pilgrimage, only Ishan was able to show them where all the places of the Lord's pastimes were. In the Bhakti-ratnakara, it is said that when Ishan showed these devotees the holy places, they were already old and in a state of disrepair. This gives some idea of how old he must have been.

Nearly everyone has disappeared from Nabadwip. No one but the Lord's servant Ishan remains here. (Bhakti-ratnakara 11.721)

Srinivas Acharya, Narottama Thakur and Ramachandra Kaviraj received Ishan Thakur's blessings in Nabadwip Dham and were embraced by him before leaving to visit Srikhanda where they met with Raghunandan Thakur. When they arrived there, they received the news that Ishan had died.

I heard from some people while on my way here that Ishan has disappeared. (Bhakti-ratnakara 13.21)

After Mahaprabhu and Sachi Mata had disappeared, Vamsivadananda Thakur served Vishnupriya Devi and Ishan Thakur.



## **Sri Vāṁsivadanananda Thakur**

\*vāṁsi kṛṣṇa-priya yasit sa vāṁsi-dasa-ṭhakkuraḥ |

+++Vāṁsivadanananda Thakur was Krishna’s flute in Vraja. (Gaura-gaṇoddesa-dipika 179)

The gopis praised the good fortune of Krishna’s flute, for he was able to constantly drink the nectar of Krishna’s lips. Everything in Vraja is spiritual, i.e., conscious, and so the flute could take human form as Sri Vāṁsivadanananda Thakur. His life story has been recounted by his grandson, Srivallabha Das, in the book Vāṁsi-vilasa. Other books which contain details of his life are Sripaṭa-paryāṭana and Bhakti-ratnakara, and the Gauḍiya Vaiṣṇava Abhidhana also gives a brief biography.

Vāṁsivadanananda Thakur was known by five names in Gaudiya Vaishnava society: Vāṁsivadana, Vāṁsidas, Vāṁsi, Vadana, and Vadananda. He was a well-known writer of devotional songs. His appearance took place on the day of the spring full moon (in the month of Chaitra) in either 1416 (according to Vāṁsi-sikṣa) or 1427 of the Saka era (1495 or 1506 AD.).

### **Vāṁsivadanananda’s home in Nabadwip**

In the Sripaṭa-paryāṭana, the following information is given:

+++The two villages known as Kuliya and Pahaṛapura were side by side. Vāṁsivadana, Kavidatta and Saraṅga Thakur lived there. As the town grew, it was known as Kuliya Pahaṛapura.

Vaṁsivadanananda Thakur's home was in Koladvipa, i.e., the present-day town of Nabadwip which was formerly known as Kuliya Paharapura. Kuliya had four neighborhoods known as Teghari, Bneciyaṛa, Bedaṛapaṛa and Cineḍaṅga. Srikara Caṭṭopadhyaya came from Bilvagrama to live in Bneciyaṛa. Amongst the descendants of Srikara Caṭṭopadhyaya was Yudhiṣṭhira Caṭṭopadhyaya who had three sons: Madhava Das (nicknamed Chakaṛi), Hari Das (Tinakaṛi) and Krishnasampatti (Dukaṛi) Caṭṭopadhyaya. Chakaṛi Caṭṭopadhyaya was Vaṁsivadana's father. His mother's name was Candrakala Devi. When Mahaprabhu passed through Kuliya on his trip through Bengal which ultimately ended at Kanair Naṭasala, he stayed at Chakaṛi Caṭṭopadhyaya's house for seven days. During this time he gave his blessings to all the residents of Nabadwip and in particular to Devananda Pandit. This information comes from Kavi Kaṛṇapura's Chaitanya-candrodaya Naṭaka.

It is said that both Mahaprabhu and Advaita Acharya were present when Vaṁsivadanananda was born. After Mahaprabhu took sannyaśa, Vaṁsivadanananda was engaged as Sachi Mata and Vishnupriya's servant and protector. When Srinivas Acharya came to Nabadwip to see the Lord's family, Vaṁsi embraced him emotionally. This is described in the Bhakti-ratnakara:

+++Though he had not been introduced, Vaṁsivadanananda guessed that this must be Srinivas. He approached him and asked him who he was. Srinivas told him everything about himself. Vaṁsivadanananda embraced him and washed his body with his tears. Srinivas wanted to fall to the ground and pay obeisances to Vaṁsi Thakur, but Vaṁsi would not let him. He then went and told Vishnupriya Isvari and Sachi Ma that Srinivas had come. (Bhakti-ratnakara 4.20-24)

Vaṁsivadanananda Thakur lived as a householder. He had two sons, Chaitanya Das and Nityananda Das. His deity's name was Praṇavallabha. Later, at Vishnupriya Devi's request, he established the worship of the Mahaprabhu deity. He also worshiped the Gopinath deity of his forefathers. He spent the last part of life in his ancestral village of Bilvagrama. The Bhattacharyas of that village are said to be his descendants.

## **Ramai Thakur**

Vaṁsivadanananda Thakur's grandson, the son of Chaitanya Das, was named Sri Ramachandra or Ramai Thakur. He found deities of Rama and Krishna deities at Praskandana Tirtha in Vrindavan [FN: Praskandana Tirtha is the Yamuna ghaṭa which is not far from Dvadasaditya Ṭila. It is said that when Krishna fought with Kaliya in the middle of the Yamuna, he caught cold in the water. When he came out, all the twelve Adityas appeared simultaneously and warmed him up. Krishna became so hot that he started to sweat. His sweat flowed down and merged with the water of the Yamuna at the place known as Praskandana Tirtha.] and then brought them to Baghna Paṛa in Burdwan district. They are known as Sri-Rama-Kanai.

Vaṁsivadanananda Thakur's family received the mercy of Jahnava Thakurani. The following comment is found in the Gaudiya magazine (22.30-37): <Jahnava Mata asked for Ramachandra to be given to her. She gave him initiation and then took him to Khardaha where she taught him Vaishnava philosophy.>

### **A song by Vaṁsivadanananda**

The following is a song written by Vaṁsivadanananda Thakur:

*ara na heriba	prasara kapale	alaka tilaka kaca /
*ara na heriba	sonara kamale	nayana khanjana naca //
*ara na nacibe	srivasa mandi	bhakata cataka laiya /
*ara na nacibe	apanara ghare	amara dekhiba caiya //
*ara ki du' bhai	nimai nitai	nacibe ek ṭhani /
*nimai kariya	phukari sadai	nimai kothao nai //
*nidaya kesava	bharati asiya	mathaya paṛila baja /

\*gaurāṅga sundara na dekhi kemane rahiba nadiya maja //

\*keba hena jana anibe ekhana amara gaurāṅga raya /

\*sasurī vadhura rodana suniya vaṁsi gaṛagaṛi jaya //

+++No more will I see his broad forehead, decorated with tilaka and sandalwood dots;

no more will I see his eyes dance like hummingbirds in the golden lotus of his face.

No longer will he dance in Srivasa's house with his sparrow-like devotees;

no more will he dance in his own home, while looking upon me.

+++Will Nimai and Nitai, those two divine brothers ever dance together again?

I call out Nimai's name, but Nimai is nowhere to be seen.

+++The heartless Keshava Bharati came and threw a thunderbolt on all of our heads.

How can we now stay in Nabadwip, now that we cannot see Gauranga here?

+++Who is there here who can now bring my Gauranga back?

When Vaṁsi hears his young wife and her mother-in-law crying,

he rolls on the ground in his pain.

**Srila Narahari Sarkar Thakur**

pura madhumati praṇa-sakhi vṛndavane sthita /

adhuna narahary-akhyaḥ sarakaraḥ prabhoḥ priyaḥ //

She who was previously Radha's intimate girlfriend named Madhumati is today Narahari Sarkar, the Lord's dear associate. (Gaura-gaṇoddesa-dipika 117)

Srila Narahari Sarkar Thakur is counted as one of Chaitanya's branches on the desire tree of pure devotional service. By Mahaprabhu's desire, he took birth in a physician (vaidya) family, blessing his family by so doing. He was the Lord's chief associate amongst the residents of the village of Srikhanda. The Srikhanda railway station is in Burdwan district four miles west of Katwa. Narahari's home is about one mile from the station. Some of the other residents of Srikhanda who were devotees of Lord Chaitanya were: Sri Mukunda, Sri Raghunandan, Sri Chiranjiva, Sri Sulocana, Sri Damodar Kaviraj, Sri Ramachandra Kaviraj, Sri Govinda Kaviraj, Sri Balaram Das, Sri Ratikanta, Sri Ramagopala Das, Sri Pitambara Das, Sri Sachinandana, Sri Jagadananda, etc. Krishnadas Kaviraj Goswami mentions many of these names as Chaitanya's branches that generously distributed the fruits of love of God. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 1.10.78-9)

The scholar Bharat Mallik has written the following Sanskrit verses about Narahari's appearance in a vaidya family in his book Candra-prabha:

srikhaṇḍa-nama-nagari raḍhe baṅgeṣu visruta /

sarveṣam eva vaidyanam asrayo yatra vidyate //

yatra goṣṭhi-bhuta vaidya yaḥ khaṇḍo'bhud bhiṣak-priyaḥ /

viseṣataḥ kulinanam sarveṣam eva vasa-bhuḥ //

In Bengal, in the area known as Rarha (Burdwan, Birbhum), there is a famous town known as Srikhanda that gave shelter to all the physician clans. Since vaidyas gathered there, it became a favored residence for them, especially those who were of the most noble birth.

In the Gauḍiya Vaiṣṇava Abhidhana, it is stated that Narahari Sarkar Thakur

appeared in either the Saka year 1401 or 1402 (1479-80 AD). His father's name was Sri Narayan Das, his mother Sri Goyi. Sri Goyi was the daughter of Murari Sena. Narayan Das had three sons, Mukunda, Madhava and Narahari. Raghunandan Thakur was Mukunda's son. (Bhakti-ratnakara 11.730-1)

The author of Chaitanya Maṅgala, Locana Das, who came from the village of Kogram, near Jhamatpur, was Narahari's disciple. For this reason, Locana Das writes that Srila Gadadhara Pandit Goswami and Narahari Sarkar Thakur were Mahaprabhu's dearest associates. On the other hand, in Chaitanya Bhagavat, Vrindavan Das Thakur has not spoken at any length about the devotees of Srikhanda.

Srila Locana Das Thakur has written the following about his guru in Chaitanya Maṅgala:

Narahari Das Thakur is my worshipable master. He possessed the power of the pure lineage of a family of physicians. His body was permeated by love for Krishna, and other than Krishna-prema, he taught nothing to those who were his disciples. He was previously known as Madhumati, one of Radha's dearest sakhis in Vrindavan, a storehouse of sweetness. Now in the Age of Kali, with the appearance of Gauranga, he has become the keeper of the storehouse of love for Radha and Krishna.

After the death of his father Narayan, Narahari's older brother Mukunda arranged for him to study in Nabadwip. It is said that Mukunda sometimes worked as the Shah's family physician. Narahari quickly became very learned as well as a connoisseur of the flavors of devotional. Even before becoming Mahaprabhu's associate, he composed songs glorifying Radha and Govinda's pastimes. When Srila Gadadhara Pandit Goswami was constantly by the Lord's side, engaged in his service, Narahari had the good fortune to enter into his association. Narahari Sarkar Thakur's personal service was to fan the Lord with the yaktail whisk. Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur, Mahaprabhu's personal representative, confirmed this in his Gaura-arati:

narahari adi kare camara ḍhulay /

sanjaya, mukunda, vasu ghoṣa adi gay //

Narahari and the other residents of Srikhanda fanned with the camara, while Sanjaya, Mukunda and Vasu Ghosh sang.

Narahari wrote several books, including Bhakti-candrika-paṭala, Sri-Kṛṣṇa-bhajanamṛta, Sri-caitanya-sahasranama, Sri-Sachinandanaṣṭaka, Sri-Radhaṣṭaka, etc. All of these are well known and thought of highly by the devotees.

The following story is told about Narahari: Once when Mahaprabhu and Nityananda Prabhu came to his house in Srikhanda, they suddenly expressed a desire for honey. Narahari demonstrated his miraculous powers by transforming the water in a pond near his house into honey. He quenched the Lords' desire for honey with water from this pond, which has ever since been called Madhu-puṣkariṇi. The Lord gave Narahari the order in a dream to install three deities of himself, which are currently worshipped in Srikhanda, Katwa and Ganganagara.

Narahari Sarkar Thakur also participated in the Lord's activities in Puri. He and the other residents of Srikhanda would come every year with Shivananda Sena (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.1.132). After his pilgrimage to South India, when he had saved so many people by giving them love for Krishna, Mahaprabhu returned to Puri whence Nityananda sent his servant Kala Krishna Das back to Bengal to tell everyone of the Lord's arrival. All the devotees immediately made arrangements to go to Jagannath Puri to see the Lord. The Khaṇḍa-vasis were amongst their number.

Mukunda, Narahari, and Raghunandan from Srikhanda arrived at Advaita Acharya's house to go to Nilachala. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.10.90)

After Jagannath's Snana Yatra, Jagannath would be unavailable for darshan. Mahaprabhu would go to Alalanath during this time in search of relief from the feelings of separation due to not being able to see Jagannath. When Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya asked Gopinath Acharya to identify the Lord's devotees, he mentioned the names of Narahari, Mukunda Das, Raghunandan, Chiranjiva and Sulochan. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.11.92)

During the Rathayatra festival, the Lord formed seven kirtan groups with the devotees from Bengal. One of these was composed uniquely of the devotees from Srikhanda. Krishnadas Kaviraj Goswami writes that Narahari and Raghunandan were the dancers for this group, which sang separately from the others. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.13.46)

When the Lord gave all the devotees directions for service, he told Narahari to remain in the association of devotees. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.15.132)

Many people confuse the author of Bhakti-ratnakara, Narahari Chakravarti, with Narahari Sarkar Thakur. The former, who is also known as Ghanashyama Das, is a different person who was born in the district of Murshidabad. His father's name was Jagannath Chakravarti and he was a disciple of Vishvanath Chakravarti. On Govindaji's order, he was engaged as the cook for the Govinda temple and was known as the "cooking pujari" (rasuiya pujari) in Braj.

**The following song was written by Narahari Sarkar Thakur:**

aola gaura puna hi      nadiya pura  
hoyata manahi ullasa /  
aiche ananda kanda      kiye heraba  
karabahi kirtana vilasa //  
hari hari,  
kaba hama heraba      so mukha-cm̐jada /  
viraha payodhi kabahu      dina pañ raba  
ṭuṭaba hṛdayaka bañdha //  
kundana kanaka pañti      keba heraba  
yajna ki sutra viraja /  
bahu-jugala tuli      hari hari bolaba  
naṭana bhakata-gaṇa majha //  
eta kahi nayana mudi      bahu saba jana  
gaura prema bhela bhora /



narahari dasa asa    kaba puraba

heraba gaura-kisora //

If Gaura came back to Nadia town, my mind would be filled with joy. Then I would see him, the source of all joy, performing his kirtan pastimes.

Hari Hari! When will I again gaze upon that moon-like face? When will that day come when the dam holding the ocean of separation in my heart breaks?

When will I see the golden form of the Lord, wrapped in his yajna-sutra? Lifting my arms in the air, I will shout “Hari! Hari!” and dance in the midst of the devotees.

Saying such things, many of Gaura’s devotees close their eyes and merge into love for him. When will Narahari’s desires be filled? When will he gaze again upon the form of the young Gaura?

Narahari disappeared in around 1540 AD. [Not according to his descendants, who say that he lived 100 years until 1578 or so.] in the month of Agrahayan on the kṛṣṇa ekadasi day. Srinivas Acharya officiated at his funeral ceremony. Nityananda Prabhu’s son Virachandra Goswami and many other important Vaishnavas were in Srikhanda to celebrate Narahari’s disappearance feast, which is described in Bhakti-ratnakara:

Some people said, “Brothers! Do not leave right away. An ocean of prema will flood over in Srikhanda in a few days. On the thirteenth day of the waning moon of Agrahayan, when Narahari Thakur disappeared, a great festival will be held here.” (Bhakti-ratnakara 9.512-4)

## **Srila Raghunandan Thakur**

vyuhas tṛtiyaḥ pradyumnaḥ priya-narma-sakho’bhavat |

cakre lila-sahayam yo radha-madhavayor vraje |

sri-caitanyadvaita-tanuḥ sa eva raghunandanah ||

The third member of the catur-vyuha, Pradyumna, took part in Radha Madhava's lila in Vraja as Krishna's intimate friend or priya-narma-sakha. He has now appeared as Raghunandan, whose body is not different from that of Chaitanya. (Gaura-gaṇoddesa-dipika 70)

### **Raghunandan's father, Mukunda Das**

Raghunandan was born into a family of physicians<sup>1116</sup>See chapter 29 on Narahari Sarkar Thakur.<sup>1116</sup> in the Saka year 1432 (1510 AD). His father's name was Mukunda Das, his mother's name is unknown. Mukunda Das was Narahari Sarkar Thakur's older brother. In the fifteenth chapter of the Madhya-lila of Chaitanya Charitamrita, it is clearly said that Mukunda Das was physician to the king.

Externally, he appears to be a physician to the king who is engaged in government service. But internally, he is filled with divine love. Who would be able to know his love? (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.15.120)

Once when Mukunda Das was engaged in treating the king, he saw a peacock feather and fainted. This incident is also described in the Chaitanya Charitamrita (2.15.121ff). His home was in Srikhanda, a village in Burdwan district. On the Katwa-Burdwan rail line, the first station west of Katwa is Sripat Srikhanda, and the second Srikhanda. Mukunda Das's home is about one mile from the Srikhanda station. Raghunandan Thakur took birth on the Vasanta Panchami day. His uncle Narahari took a great deal of interest in raising Raghunandan, for whom he had much affection.

Chaitanya Mahaprabhu indicated that one's importance increases with the depth of devotion by telling Mukunda Das that his son was really his father.

The three most important devotees from Srikhanda were Mukunda Das,

Raghunandan and Narahari. Mahaprabhu asked Mukunda Das, “Are you Raghunandan’s father and he, your son? Or, is he your father and you his son? Tell me so that I can put my doubts to rest.” Mukunda answered, “Raghunandan is my father and I am his son, rest assured. Whatever devotion we have comes from him, therefore I see him as my father.” When he heard Mukunda Das’s answer, Mahaprabhu was thrilled and he said, “He from whom we imbibe devotion is certainly our guru.” (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.15.112-117)

### **Mahaprabhu gave Raghunandan the service of deity worship.**

Raghunandan’s work is to serve Krishna. He has no interest in anything other than serving Krishna. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.15.131)

From his early childhood, Raghunandan Thakur would feed the family’s Gopinath deity laddus. Uddhava Das has written a song in which this lila is described:

Mukunda Das lived in the village of Srikhanda, where his household deity was named Gopinath. One day he had to go somewhere for work and he called Raghunandan to do the service.

He said, “In this house we worship Krishna, so I want you to be sure to give him something to eat.” and then he left. Raghunandan did as his father had ordered and made the offering to the deity.

Raghunandan was just a child and in his simplicity, he said to Gopinath, “Eat! Eat!” Krishna is controlled by love, and so he did as the child told him and ate everything on the plate without leaving a grain of rice.

When Mukunda Das returned, he asked the boy to bring him the prasada from the offering he had made. The child answered, “Father, he ate everything and left no remnants.”

Mukunda was astonished at his child’s wonderful words that he asked him again on another occasion to make an offering. This time after he left the house, he

returned and hid to watch what his son would do.

Raghunandan joyfully placed a laḍḍu in Krishna's hand and said in a commanding voice, "Eat! Eat!". When Krishna had eaten half of the laddu, Raghunandan saw Mukunda Das in the doorway.

Mukunda saw that Krishna did not take another bite and that the half-eaten laddu remained in his hand. This caused him to be filled with love. He embraced his child and, as tears of joy rained from his eyes, spoke to him in a broken voice.

To this day, fortunate people come to Srikhanda to see the half-eaten laddu in Gopinath's hand. Raghunandan is not different from Cupid himself, says Uddhava Das with great feeling.

[All the mahantas] felt fascinated to see the Gopinath deity whom Raghunandan had fed laddus. (Bhakti-ratnakara 9.525)

### **Other miraculous events**

Narahari Sarkar Thakur gave mead to Nityananda Prabhu and Mahaprabhu from a pond which was right next to their home. This pond became known as Madhu Pushkarini. The legend is told that a kadamba tree which grew right next to the pond always had two flowers blooming regardless of the season by Raghunandan's miraculous powers.

According to the Gauḍiya Vaiṣṇava Abhidhana, another miraculous event took place in Raghunandan's life: One day Abhirama Thakur came to Srikhanda and paid his obeisances to Raghunandan. Then he embraced him and melted with feelings of prema. Raghunandan started to dance and sing kirtan, and while doing so, one of his ankle bells slipped from his foot and went flying off, landing four miles away in Akai Hat near his disciple Krishna Das's house. Later, in order to commemorate the event, a tank was excavated there which was given the name Nupur Kund.

Mahaprabhu, the father of sankirtan, gave his adopted son Raghunandan Thakur

the authority to offer the garland on the day before the sankirtan yajna (the adhivasa) and to make the final offering at the yajna's end.

Raghunandan Thakur accompanied the Bengali devotees to Puri every year at caturmasya. He would dance with his uncle Narahari at the Rathayatra festival in the group formed by the residents of Srikhanda.

He participated in the Kheturi festival organized by Narottama Das Thakur, at Gadadhara Das's festival in Katwa and at the commemorative festival for Narahari Sarkar Thakur in Srikhanda.

Some people said, "Anyone who is dear to Raghunandan will win Mahaprabhu's mercy for life after life." Others said, "Raghunandan is so merciful that he gives life to the most humble and fallen." Some said, "What humility! There is no one who is his equal." And others, "He is as beautiful as Kandarpa himself!", etc. (Bhakti-ratnakara 9.660 ff.)

Srila Raghunandan Thakur had great affection for Srinivas Acharya. Prior to his disappearance he consoled Srinivas that despite the difficult times, he would be able to spread Vaishnavism in the future:

"A difficult time is coming in which people will succumb to various doubts. Narahari Prabhu wrote in his Sri-Kṛṣṇa-bhajanamṛta:

kṛṣṇa-caitanya-candreṇa nityanandena saṁhṛte |

avatare kalav asmin vaiṣṇavaḥ sarva eva hi ||

bhaviṣyanti sadodvignaḥ kale kale dine dine |

prayaḥ sandigdha-hṛdaya uttametara-madhyamaḥ || (verses 3-4)

Once our Lord Krishna Chaitanya and his companion Nityananda Prabhu have ended their incarnation, the Vaishnavas in this age of Kali will be anxious with every passing day. Whether very advanced, somewhat advanced or neophyte, their hearts will nearly always be filled with doubt.

But don't let this worry you. Lord Gauranga will accomplish many great works through you. I bless you that you remain long on this earth and that you and your followers protect our Lord's religion. Those who are opposed to devotion to

Krishna will become devotees by your influence and they will take shelter of you. (Bhakti-ratnakara 13.174-179)

Raghunandan Thakur bequeathed the service of his Gaura-Gopal deity to his son Kanai Thakur and then left this world on the fourth day of the waxing moon in the month of Shravan. Kanai Thakur gave a feast as a part of his father's last rites:

Raghunandan slowly became hidden to mortal eyes while repeating again and again the names of Sri Krishna Chaitanya. How glorious is that day of Shravan sukla caturthi! Who will not sing the glories of Raghunandan Thakur? (Bhakti-ratnakara 13.183-4)

## **Sri Shivananda Sena**

pura vṛndavane vira duti sarvas ca gopikaḥ /

ninaya kṛṣṇa-nikaṭaṁ sedaniṁ janako mama // (Gaura-gaṇoddesa-dipika 176)

The go-between Vira, who previously brought all the gopis to Krishna, is my father.

## **Shivananda's home and family**

Shivananda Sena's son, Paramananda Sena, also known as Kavi Karnapura, wrote this verse in his Gaura-gaṇoddesa-dipika. Just as Vira Dutī acted to enrich the pastimes of Krishna and the gopis, Shivananda Sena appeared to enrich Gaura Hari's lila. Shivananda Sena's home was in the present day city of Halisahar, in Kumarahatta near Kañcarapara. This is the same town in which Isvara Puri, Mahāprabhu's guru, was born. Mahāprabhu took the earth from Isvara Puri's birthplace. Ever since, devotees have been taking earth from that

spot, leaving a hole in the ground big enough to form a pool that has taken the name of Sri Chaitanya Doba.

After Mahaprabhu took sannyas, Srivasa Pandit and his family found it impossible painful to remain in Nabadwip and so moved to Kumarahatta. Other notable residents of the town were Vasudeva Datta Thakur, Khanja Bhagavan Das and others. The Gaura Gopal deity installed by Shivananda Sena is still being worshiped in the Krishnaraya temple in Kanchra Para.

Shivananda Sena was present when Mahaprabhu came to visit Srivasa Pandit's house in Kumaahatta:

Vasudeva Datta came immediately, as did Shivananda Sena and his family members. (Chaitanya Bhagavat 3.5.18)

A Vaishnava may take birth in any family. Shivananda Sena manifested his lila of being born in the Vaidya or physician caste for its glory.

Sri Shivananda Sena had three sons: Sri Chaitanya Das, Sri Rama Das and Sri Paramananda Kavi Karnapur.

All the devotees went to Puri at the time of the Rathayatra in order to see Mahaprabhu. Shivananda Sena managed these trip, taking responsibility for the route the devotees took, the costs of both coming and going, their lodgings, etc.

On the Lord's orders, every single year all the devotees came to see the Rathayatra.... Amongst them were Krishna's own singer, Mukunda Datta and Shivananda Sena and others who were accompanied by their family members. (Chaitanya Bhagavat 3.8.5, 15)

### **Shivananda's service**

Shivananda Sena took care of the paying the customs duties and ferry fees for the group. He took personal care of everyone in the pilgrimage. He care of all

the devotees' necessities, especially making lodging arrangements. He knew the roads through Orissa and would show the way. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.16.19-20)

In the third year, when Mahaprabhu's associates took their wives with them, Shivananda Sena also took his wife and son, Sri Chaitanya Das. The Chaitanya Charitamrita's description of that trip is as follows:

Malini accompanied Srivasa Pandit, Shivananda Sena's wife travelled with him. Shivananda's little boy named Chaitanya Das also jubilantly came along with them to see the Lord... Shivananda Sena dealt with customs officials and made eating and lodging arrangements, ecstatically going on the road to see Mahaprabhu. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.16.22-3, 26-7)

One of Mahaprabhu's dear devotees was Vasudeva Datta from Chittagong. He was very generous and somewhat prodigal in his spending. Mahaprabhu told Shivananda Sena to take charge of his affairs to help him cut back on his expenses, giving practical instructions on the necessity of earning money to run a household.

He respectfully said to Shivananda Sena, "Please take Vasudeva Datta to hand. He is too generous. He spends whatever he earns on the very same day. He is a householder, he has to save some money; if he doesn't do so, he will not be able to maintain his wife and family. I want you to supervise his income and expenditures; be his manager and resolve his difficulties. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.15.93-96)

### **Shivananda Sena and the dog**

In the Chaitanya Charitamrita, Krishnadas Kaviraj Goswami has told an anecdote about the amazing relationship between Shivananda Sena and a dog.

One year, as the pilgrimage party was on its way to Puri, a dog began to tag along with it. When they had to cross a certain river, the ferryman refused to allow the dog to get on board the ferry. Shivananda Sena finally paid him 10



paṇas of cowry shells to get it across. One day, Shivananda's servant forgot to feed the dog and it disappeared. He sent ten men to find the animal, but they had no success. Shivananda was so upset that he did not eat his meal that evening. In great anxiety, the devotees reached Puri and met Mahaprabhu and then went to the temple to see Jagannath. Mahaprabhu ate with the devotees and at the end of the meal sent them all to their lodgings. The next day, the devotees came to see Mahaprabhu and were amazed to see the dog there. Mahaprabhu was laughing and giving coconut prasada to the animal and was saying, "Chant Hare Krishna, Hare Rama!" The dog was clearly barking out the names and eating the prasada given him by the Lord. Everyone was completely astonished to see this extraordinary happening. Shivananda Sena prostrated himself on the ground in obeisances to the dog and begged him for forgiveness with all humility. After this, the dog disappeared and was never seen again. By Mahaprabhu's mercy, the dog had received a spiritual body and gone to Vaikuntha.

The next day, no one saw the dog anywhere for it had obtained a spiritual body and gone to Vaikuntha. These are the transcendental pastimes of Lord Sachinandana: he made a dog say the names of Krishna and then he sent him to the spiritual world. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.1.32-3)

### **Shivananda Sena and Nakula Brahmachari**

During the period of Muslim rule, the county courthouse in the town of Kalna in the district of Burdwan was in the neighborhood named Ambika. This neighborhood was known then as Ambua Muluk, today as Pyari Ganj. A great Vaishnava named Nakula Brahmachari lived there. Mahaprabhu entered into Nakula's heart out of his desire to deliver the people of Bengal. The brahmachari began to behave just like someone who was possessed by the planets and would dance, sing and shout in a deep mood of divine love. Both his inner attitude and his physical appearance took on Mahaprabhu's nature.

When people heard about the miraculous occurrences surrounding Nakula Brahmachari, they flocked to see him. In his presence everyone would be influenced by his absorption in Mahaprabhu's mood; they would sing Krishna's names and begin to experience the taste of Krishna-prema.

When he heard about all this, Shivananda Sena could not at first believe that it was true and he decided to test Nakula Brahmachari to eradicate his doubts. He came to Ambika, but kept himself at some distance from the brahmachari. His idea was that if Nakula were truly possessed by Mahaprabhu, he would call out to him and tell him what his own secret mantra was. In spite of the fact that Shivananda was invisible in the great crowd of countless devotees, Nakula called out his name and sent people to look for him. When he heard his name being called, Shivananda came forth and paid his obeisances to Nakula. The brahmachari said,

“You doubted me, so listen carefully and I will put an end to your doubts. Your worshipable mantra is the four-syllable Gaura-Gopal mantra. Give up the uncertainty which you kept in your heart.” (Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.2.30-31)

When he heard this, Shivananda became convinced that Nakula Brahmachari was indeed filled with the presence of Mahaprabhu. He paid his prostrated obeisances to him and acknowledged his faith and devotion to him. This is just one example of Mahaprabhu’s inconceivable potencies.

### **Shivananda Sena and Narasinghananda Brahmachari**

Shivananda Sena had a nephew, Srikanta Sena, who was so eager to see the Lord that one year he went to Puri alone. Mahaprabhu treated him warmly and kept him for two months before instructing him to return to Bengal. He told him to convey the message to the Bengali devotees that there was no need for them to come to Puri that year, for he himself would be visiting Bengal in the month of Paush. He would then meet with them all and eat at Jagadananda’s house. When Srikanta returned with the news, everyone was jubilant in expectation of the Lord’s visit. But when the time of Mahaprabhu’s expected arrival approached, Shivananda, Jagadananda and the others who had been waiting anxiously were distressed to see that he did not come.

At that time, Pradyumna Brahmachari (who had been given the name Nrisinghananda by Mahaprabhu) happened by and asked them why everyone was so unhappy. When he heard about their disappointment over Mahaprabhu’s

non-arrival, he assured them that he would bring Mahaprabhu there within three days. Everyone knew of Pradyumna's spiritual powers and so they believed him.

Pradyumna sat down in meditation. After two days, he said, "Mahaprabhu has arrived in Panihati. By midday tomorrow he will be at Shivananda's house."

Without showing the slightest doubt, he ordered Shivananda Sena to start making preparations for a feast in honor of Mahaprabhu's arrival.

Nrisinghananda personally started cooking early in the morning, and made a large variety of preparations, which he distributed onto three plates to make offerings to Jagannath, Nrisinghadeva and to Mahaprabhu. As soon as he sat down in meditation for the offerings, Mahaprabhu personally appeared and ate all three offerings, without leaving any remnants.

Pradyumna was overjoyed to see the Lord accept his offerings. Nevertheless, though he well knew that on a higher level there is no distinction between Mahaprabhu, Nrisingha and Jagannath, in order to demonstrate the principle of devotion to one's own personal worshipable deity, he said, "Nrisinghadeva has not eaten anything today." Shivananda asked why this was so and Pradyumna Brahmachari answered,

"Mahaprabhu ate the offerings intended for all three deities. Therefore Nrisingha and Jagannath have gone hungry." (Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.2.71)

When he heard this, Shivananda felt a twinge of doubt. Nevertheless, he furnished Pradyumna with more raw foodstuffs so that he could prepare another offering for Nrisinghadeva. The next year, when Shivananda came to Nilachala, Mahaprabhu one day started to glorify Nrisinghananda's virtues to all the devotees.

"Last year in the month of Paush, he gave me such a nice meal. I have never tasted such delicious rice and vegetables!" (Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.2.77)

All the devotees were struck with wonder at hearing this, and Shivananda himself became confident that the incident was true. This is another example of Mahaprabhu's mercy to Shivananda.

## **Nityananda Prabhu's punishment of Shivananda**

Shivananda Sena also received much mercy from Nityananda Prabhu. One day Nityananda kicked Shivananda who thus received the touch of his lotus feet, a rare attainment for even Brahma and the demigods. Krishnadas Kaviraj Goswami has described this incident in the 12th chapter of the Chaitanya Charitamrita's Antya-lila. After the disappearance of Hari Das Thakur, Mahaprabhu's ecstatic transformations increased day by day. That year, the devotees gathered in Nabadwip as usual in preparation for the journey to Puri. Nityananda also joined the party, even though Mahaprabhu had expressly forbidden him to come. Shivananda was accompanied by his wife and three sons. Since he knew the roads of Orissa, he was in charge of the party and would take care of the customs agents, toll collectors, etc., along the way.

Normally, Shivananda would cross the tollgate last, after first insuring that all members of the party had gone through. On one occasion, the procedure took longer than usual and since Shivananda had not arranged for lodgings for the company in the nearby village, the devotees were obliged to stand and sit about under a tree until quite late at night. While waiting for Shivananda to come through the tollgate, Nityananda Prabhu appeared to take on the mood of a cowherd boy from Vraja overcome by hunger. He made a pretense of being angry at Shivananda, complaining, "Shiva has still not come and arranged for a place for us to stay and I am dying of hunger. I curse his three sons to die."

On hearing Nityananda make such a curse, Shivananda's wife started to cry. When Shivananda finally returned from paying the toll collector, he had to calm his wife. He said, "Foolish woman! Why are you needlessly crying? Let our sons die for the inconvenience we have caused Nityananda Prabhu."

He then went to speak to Nityananda, who kicked him in the head as he paid his obeisances. Shivananda was overjoyed to receive the merciful touch of the Lord's foot and immediately went to arrange quarters for the night in the house of a milkman. When Shivananda had brought Nityananda Prabhu to his lodgings, he glorified him and prayed to receive the touch of his feet again and again. He said,

"Today you have accepted me as your servant, for you have punished me appropriately as you would your own servant. You are so compassionate that even your punishments are a sign of your causeless mercy. Who in the three

worlds can understand your personality? The dust of your feet is unattainable by even Brahma, yet it has fallen on my wretched body. My life, my family and my service have all become perfected today. Today I have attained devotion to Krishna, as well as all the other goals of human life.” (Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.12.27-30)

Nityananda was so pleased by Shivananda’s prayers that he embraced him. However, Srikanta, Shivananda’s nephew, had been upset by Nityananda’s behavior. He thought, “Shivananda is Mahaprabhu’s dear associate and respected by all the devotees, and yet Nityananda has kicked him in the head.” He left the party and went ahead to Puri on his own. Upon his arrival, he went to Mahaprabhu and paid his prostrated obeisances. Mahaprabhu first told his servant Govinda to instruct Srikanta to take off his upper garments when paying obeisances. Then, knowing his thoughts, he said to his associates,

“Srikanta has come on his own because of some great mental distress. Don’t say anything to him; let him do as he wishes.” (Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.12.38)

From these words, Srikanta could understand that Mahaprabhu is all-knowing and so said nothing about the incident to anyone. The Lord is so affectionate to his devotees that even their friends and relations are also dear to him.

aham bhaktaparadhino hy asvatantra iva dvija |

sadhubhir grasta-hṛdayo bhaktair bhakta-janapriyaḥ |

I am under the control of my devotees, O Brahmin, as though I were completely lacking any independence. The saintly devotees have taken possession of my heart, for I am dear to them and they to me. (Srimad Bhagavatam 9.4.63)

### **Mahaprabhu’s mercy on Shivananda’s family**

Due to their relation to Shivananda, his wife and three sons also received the Lord’s unlimited mercy. He named his youngest son Paramananda Das in accordance with Mahaprabhu’s instruction. Mahaprabhu would jokingly call him

Puri Das. When Shivananda presented the little child to him, the Lord affectionately allowed him to suck on his toe.

Who can find the limits of the ocean of Shivananda's good fortune? The Lord accepted his entire family as his own. Then he sat down and ate with all the devotees. As he washed his mouth and hands after the meal, he said to Govinda: "As long as Shivananda Sena, his wife and child remain in Puri, you should give them my remnants." (Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.12.51-3)

Mahaprabhu's unlimited mercy on Shivananda's youngest son, Puri Das, is described in the sixteenth chapter of the Antya-lila. One year, when Shivananda and his wife were in Puri for the Rathayatra, Mahaprabhu said to the little boy, "Say Krishna, say Krishna!" Though the Lord asked him to chant repeatedly, the boy refused to utter the Holy Name. His embarrassed father also tried to get him to chant, but the child was steadfast in his refusal. Mahaprabhu said that he had induced everyone in the universe, even including the lower forms of life, to chant the names of Krishna, but was unable to make this little child do so. What could be the reason? Svarupa Damodar realized what it was: "You have instructed him in the mantra consisting of Krishna's name. Now that he has received the mantra, he will not reveal it publicly but only chants it mentally. That is my guess."

In his Anubhaṣya, Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur has written: "The mantra which one has received from the guru is not to be revealed to anyone else, otherwise it will lose its potency. We have seen this previously from the story about Gadadhara Pandit."

Another day, Mahaprabhu asked Puri Das to recite a verse. Puri Das broke his silence and recited a verse of his own composition that astonished all those who heard it. Even Brahma and the gods cannot understand the glories of Mahaprabhu's mercy. Puri Das, or Kavi Karnapura's verse:

sravasoh kuvalayam akṣṇor

anjanam uraso mahendramaṇidama |

vṛndavana-ramaṇinam

maṇḍanam akhilaṁ harir jayati ||

All glories to Hari,  
the ornament for all the beauties of Vrindavan,  
who is a blue lotus for their ears,  
black collyrium for their eyes,  
and a necklace of blue sapphires  
to decorate their breast.  
(Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.16.74)

### **Shivananda and Raghunatha Das Goswami**

When Raghunatha Das Goswami left home, using a service to his guru Yadunandana Acharya as a pretext, his father Govardhana Majumdar, sent ten men to Shivananda, who was already on his way to Puri, asking him to send Raghunatha Das back. They did not find Raghunatha Das, however, and so returned empty-handed. At the end of the rainy season, when Shivananda and the other devotees returned from Puri, Govardhana Majumdar heard from some of them that Raghunatha Das was engaged in strict austere practices and begging near the Singha Dvara of the Jagannath temple. His father and mother were greatly distressed by his departure and the next time that the devotees went to Puri, Govardhana gave 400 rupees to Shivananda for his son. Raghunatha refused to accept this money for himself. Shivananda Sena's son Kavi Karnapura glorified Raghunatha Das extensively in his play, Chaitanya Candrodaya.

The dates of Shivananda Sena's appearance and disappearance are not known, nor the names of his parents or wife.

### **Sri Achyutananda**

yogamaya bhagavati grhiṇi tasya sampratam |  
sitarupeṇavatirṇa srinamna tat-prakasataḥ ||  
tasya putro'cyutanandaḥ kṛṣṇa-caitanya-vallabhaḥ |  
srimat-pañḍita-gosvami-siṣyaḥ priya iti srutaḥ ||  
yaḥ karttikeyaḥ prag asid iti jalpanti kecana |  
kecid ahu rasavido “cyuta-namni tu gopika ||  
ubhayaṁ tu samicinaṁ dvayor ekaṭra saṅgatat |  
karttikeyaḥ kṛṣṇa-misras tat-samyad iti kecana ||

The goddess Yogamaya was Advaita Acharya's wife, having appeared as Sita; his other wife Sri was her expansion. Advaita's son Achyutananda was very dear to Sri Krishna Chaitanya. He became a dear disciple of Srila Gadadhara Pandit Goswami. Some say that he was Karttikeya in his previous incarnation, while others who are knowledgeable about sacred rapture say that he was the gopi named Achyuta. Both opinions are reasonable because both identities are joined in him. Some people hold that his brother Krishna Mishra was also Karttikeya, due to his similarity to him.

Achyutananda was born as the son of Advaita Acharya and Sitadevi in the town of Shantipur in the year 1428 Saka (1506 AD). He was Advaita's oldest son and is counted as a Chaitanya branch of the tree of devotion.

sri-caitanyamarataror dvitiya-skandha-rupiṇaḥ |  
srimad-advaita-chandrasya sakha-rupan numah ||

I offer my obeisances to all the branches of Sri Advaita Candra, who is the second trunk of the eternal Chaitanya tree. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 1.12.3)

Achyutananda was one of Advaita Prabhu's major branches; from his very birth,



he served Chaitanya's lotus feet. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 1.12.13)

### **Advaita's six sons**

Advaita Acharya had six sons, of whom three, Achyutananda, Krishna Mishra and Gopal Mishra are considered to have understood the essence of spiritual life, while the other three, Balaram, Svarupa and Jagadisa, did not. The book Advaita-carita describes this as follows:

acyutaḥ kṛṣṇa-misras ca gopala-dasa eva ca |  
ratna-trayam idaṁ proktaṁ sitagarbhadi-sambhavam ||  
acarya-tanayeṣvete trayo gaura-gaṇaḥ smṛtaḥ |  
caturtho balaramas ca Svarupaḥ pancamaḥ smṛtaḥ |  
ṣaṣṭhas tu jagadisakhya acarya-tanayo hi ṣaṭ ||

The three sons Achyuta, Krishna Mishra and Gopal Das were born in the womb of Sitadevi and are called the three jewels. Amongst Advaita's sons, these three were members of Gaura's inner circle. His fourth son was Balaram, his fifth son Svarupa and the sixth, Jagadisa.

Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur paraphrases Krishnadas Kaviraj's explanation in his Amṛta-pravaha-bhaṣya: "At first, all of Advaita Prabhu's followers were of a common opinion, but in the course of time, some unfortunately adopted differing doctrines. Those who followed the opinions of Advaita himself are considered to be pure Vaishnavas; those who under some fateful influence rejected his teachings and invented a new doctrine are considered useless. We have no need of knowing the names of the useless sons of Advaita Prabhu, but have listed them together in order to be able to distinguish them. Just as the useful rice grain is separated from the chaff by winnowing, so have the useful sons of Advaita been separated from the useless."

The doctrines of Advaita Acharya are the essential teachings of spiritual life;

those who ignored his orders became useless. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 1.12.10)

All those who took Achyutananda's opinion belong to the group of Advaita Acharya's associates. They are great devotees who received his mercy and easily attained the lotus feet of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 1.12.73-4)

### **Mahaprabhu's mercy on the child Achyutananda**

After taking sannyas in Katwa, Mahaprabhu descended on Shantipur. Achyutananda was either three or five years old (as Vrindavan Das Thakur gives both ages in different places).

Advaita's son Achyutananda, a gloriously effulgent naked child, was omniscient by the Lord's inconceivable power. Greatly fortunate, he was Advaita's worthy heir. His entire body was covered with dust, but knowing the Lord had arrived he came to see him, his face covered with laughter. He fell at the Lord's feet and the Lord picked him up, dust and all, and held him on his lap. (Chaitanya Bhagavat 3.1.213-6)

While holding him, Mahaprabhu said to Achyutananda: "Since Advaita is my father, you are my brother." When he heard this, Achyuta responded by displaying a profound understanding of Mahaprabhu's spiritual identity by saying that the Lord was the friend of every single living being, and that all scriptures say that he is the father of all the creation. The devotees were astonished when they heard Achyuta say this.

### **The wisdom of Achyutananda at five**

In the fourth chapter of the Antya-khaṇḍa, Vrindavan Das Thakur writes about Achyutananda's single-minded devotion to Chaitanya Mahaprabhu in the

following way: One day, a sannyasi came to visit Advaita Prabhu's house and asked him what the relationship between Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and Keshava Bharati was. Advaita answered in a conventional way, saying that Keshava Bharati was the Lord's sannyas guru. The five year old child interjected angrily, "The Lord is the spiritual master of all the gurus of the world; he is the Supreme Lord himself. How could anyone be his guru?" When Advaita heard this wisdom from the mouth of his five-year old son, he said, "This boy is my father and I am his son!" And he asked his son forgiveness for his offense--causing the lad to hang his head with embarrassment. Krishnadas Kaviraj Goswami has also summarized this story beautifully:

When Achyutananda heard from his father that Keshava Bharati was Lord Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's spiritual master, he was very unhappy. He told his father, "Your teaching about the supreme teacher, Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, will wreak havoc in the country. Lord Chaitanya Mahaprabhu is the spiritual master of the fourteen worlds, but you say that someone else is his spiritual master. This is not supported by any revealed scripture." When Advaita Acharya felt great satisfaction to hear his five-year-old son Achyutananda display such an understanding of doctrine. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 1.12.14-7)

Mahaprabhu appeared at Advaita's house just when the entire household was and gave his blessings to Achyutananda. Prior to this occasion, Achyutananda accompanied his father to Nabadwip when he was summoned by the Lord through Srirama Pandit just before his great epiphany (Maha-prakasa). He also witnessed the Lord's punishment of his father for teaching impersonalism. In his Anubhasya, Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur writes the following: "Sri Achyuta was the Lord's devotee from childhood. There is no information that Achyutananda ever married, but he is described as the foremost of the disciples of Advaita Acharya. On the other hand, in Yadunandana Das's book describing the disciples of Gadadhara Pandit Goswami, Sakha-nirṇayamṛta, it is said that Achyutananda was a disciple and branch of Gadadhara. The passage there is as follows:

maharasamṛtanandam

acyutananda-namakam |

gadadhara-priyatamam

srimad-advaita-nandanam ||

[I offer obeisances to] Advaita Acharya's son named Achyutananda, who takes great joy in the ocean of nectarean sacred rapture. He is Gadadhara's dearest disciple.

## **Achyutananda in Puri**

Near the end of Mahaprabhu's life, Gadadhara remained permanently in Jagannath Puri. Achyutananda and Advaita's other sons also came to stay in Puri to be near him.

Achyutananda, the son of Advaita Acharya, lived in Jagannath Puri, taking shelter of Lord Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 1.10.150)"

Achyutananda came to Puri every year to celebrate the Rathayatra festival during which he danced in the sixth kirtan group that came from Shantipur. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.13.45) He was also participated as a dancer in the bera-sankirtan, when the Lord danced around the temple.

The kirtan around the temple started and the seven groups began to sing. In each of the seven groups, one devotee was the designated dancer: Advaita Acharya, Nityananda Prabhu, Vakresvara, Achyutananda, Srivasa Pandit, Satyaraj Khan, and Narahari Das. The Lord wandered from group to group, but all the devotees thought that he was with them alone. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.10.58-61)

Achyutananda also participated in the cleaning of the Gundicha temple. When Lord Jagannath was in the Gundicha temple, Mahaprabhu would go there with the devotees to see him after his morning bath. They would go three times a day and perform sankirtan in the Gundicha temple courtyard. At the Lord's behest, either Advaita Acharya, Nityananda Prabhu, Vakresvara Pandit, Achyutananda, or Hari Das Thakur would dance.

After bathing in the morning, the Lord would go to see Jagannath, taking the devotees and dancing in sankirtan. He would sometimes make Advaita dance,

sometimes Nityananda, sometimes Hari Das and sometimes Achyutananda, sometimes Vakresvara and sometimes other devotees. The Lord performed sankirtan three times a day in the courtyard of the Gundicha temple. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.14.70-72)

According to Narahari Chakravarti's Narottama-vilasa, Achyutananda remained in Puri until Mahaprabhu's disappearance. In Narahari's opinion, he spent the rest of his life living at the family home in Shantipur. He also participated in the Kheturi festival.

## Raghava Pandit

dhaniṣṭha bhakṣya-samagriṁ kṛṣṇayadad vraje'mitam |

saiva sampratam gauraṅga-priyo raghava-paṇḍitaḥ ||

guṇamala vraje yasid damayanti tu tat-svasa ||

The gopi Dhanishtha who brought unlimited amounts of food to Krishna in Vraja has now become Gauranga's dear servant, Raghava Pandit. His sister Damayanti was Guṇamala in Krishna-lila. (Gaura-gaṇoddesa-dipika 166-7)

In Krishna-lila, Dhanishtha Devi would take Krishna's prasad to Radharani on Yashoda Mata's order. Radharani would then lovingly take the prasad. Bhaktivinoda sings in his bhoga arati:

yasomati ajna peye dhaniṣṭha anita |

sri-kṛṣṇa-prasad radha bhunje haye prita ||

Mahaprabhu, who was none other than Krishna in the mood of Radharani, similarly accepted the food offerings made by Dhanishtha's incarnation, Raghava Pandit.

## **Mahaprabhu resides permanently in Raghava's house**

Raghava Pandit's home was in the town of Panihati. Panihati is on the eastern bank of the Ganges, one mile from the Sodhpur station on the Eastern Railway line out of Sealdah. Krishnadas Kaviraj Goswami has written that Mahaprabhu remained permanently in the house of Raghava Pandit.

The Lord's manifestations took place in the home of Sachi, during Nityananda's dancing, in Srivasa's kirtan, and in the house of Raghava Pandit. It is the Lord's nature to be attracted by his devotee's love. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.2.34-5)

Vrindavan Das Thakur's biography of the Lord indicates clearly how dear Raghava Pandit was to Mahaprabhu. When he saw the lord of his life coming toward his home in Panihati from Srivasa's house in Kumarahatta, Raghava Pandit fell down at his feet, overcome by love.

When the Lord of Vaikuntha saw Raghava Pandit's devotion, he blessed him with a look of favor. The Lord said, "I have come to Raghava's house and forgotten all my distress simply by seeing him. I feel the same pleasure by coming here as I do when I take a refreshing bath in the Ganges." (Chaitanya Bhagavat 3.5.81-3)

The Lord often told Raghava Pandit to cook for him because he enjoyed accepting his devotion-soaked preparations. Raghava Pandit cooked and fed the Lord with great enthusiasm. Balaram's other form, Nityananda Prabhu, would also come to eat at Raghava's house with his companions and all would praise his cooking. Mahaprabhu especially enjoyed his spinach platters.

While he was there, Gadadhara Das, Purandara Pandit, Paramesvari Das, Raghunatha Vaidya and other great Vaishnavas came to Raghava's house in Panihati by Mahaprabhu's desire. The Lord took Raghava aside in order to explain to him his identity with Nityananda Prabhu. He also told Makaradhvaja Kara that service to Raghava Pandit was the same as service to himself.

## **Raghavera jhali**

Makaradhvaja Kara, a kayastha who also lived in Panihati, was Raghava Pandit's initiated disciple. It was he who annually carried the bags of food that his spiritual master prepared for the Lord in Puri. He was named the munsib or superintendent of these bags (Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.10.40). Raghavera jhali or "Raghava's bags" were filled with various preparations that his sister Damayanti made throughout the year for Mahaprabhu. They have been mentioned in Abhirama Das Thakur's Paṭa-paryāṭana and in the Chaitanya Charitamrita.

Raghava and Damayanti lived in Panihati. They were famous for the bags of food known as Raghavera jhali. (Paṭa-paryāṭana)

Raghava Pandit, Mahaprabhu's primary follower, is the Lord's seventh branch. An important sub-branch, Makaradhvaja Kara, proceeded from him. His sister Damayanti was the Lord's dear maidservant, who throughout the year gathered various ingredients for the Lord's bhoga. Raghava filled bags with the foods Damayanti prepared and secretly carried them to Puri for the Lord. The Lord then ate these gifts of food for an entire year. Those bags are still celebrated as Raghavera jhali ["the bags of Raghava Pandit"]. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 1.10.24-27)

The generous Raghava Pandit also went with them. Mahaprabhu secretly stayed in his house. (Chaitanya Bhagavat 3.8.32)

Krishnadas Kaviraj Goswami writes a complete description of these bags in his Chaitanya Charitamrita (3.10). Krishna's devotees in Vraja have no sense of majesty in their attitude to the Lord. Damayanti would prepare sukta for the Lord because she worried that he might have problems with his digestion. Mahaprabhu was overjoyed to receive these preparations that were offered with such affection.

Raghava Pandit came with bags full of condiments prepared very nicely by his sister, Damayanti. Damayanti made varieties of unparalleled food suitable for the Lord. The Lord would then enjoy them for the entire year that followed. These are the names of some of the pickles and condiments in the bags of Raghava Pandit: mango mustard pickle, ginger mustard pickle, hot spicy mustard, lime and mango pickle, amra-koli, dried ground mango, sliced dried mango, mangoes preserved in oil and dried mango. With great attention, Damayanti also made a powdered dried bitter vegetable preparation (sukta). Do not disregard sukta because it is a bitter preparation; the Lord derived more happiness from eating this sukta than from drinking pancamṛta [a combination of milk, sugar, ghee, honey and curd]. Since Chaitanya Mahaprabhu is the Supreme Lord, he takes the spirit in which things are done; accepting the love in which a gift is given. He therefore derived great pleasure even from the dried bitter leaves of sukta and from kasandi (mustard sauce). Because of her natural love for Mahaprabhu, Damayanti considered him to be an ordinary human being and therefore worried that he might become sick from overeating and get dysentery. She prepared sukta for him, since it diminishes the mucous that accumulates in the digestive system, causing dysentery. Damayanti's affectionate attitude brought great pleasure to the Lord. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.10.13-20)

### **Raghava Pandit's strict cleanliness**

Mahaprabhu joyfully praised the extent of Raghava Pandit's devotion to his entourage in Puri, especially talking about his coconut offerings. Though Raghava Pandit possessed hundreds of coconut trees in his own garden, he would have more expensive nuts brought from afar in order to offer coconut water and pulp as offerings that Lord Chaitanya Mahaprabhu happily accepted.

Raghava Pandit never offered anything to the Lord that was not pure and of the highest quality. Paying high prices for the best possible produce, he had mangoes, jackfruit, bananas and other fruit brought from distant villages to be offered to his Mahaprabhu deity. One day a servant touched the coconut offering after his hand had brushed against the doorframe. Raghava worried that dust from people's feet had surely touched the foodstuffs. Thus, he rejected them as unsuitable for the deity and threw them away.



Should anyone criticize Raghava Pandit for throwing fruit away, Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur has warned, “Raghava Pandit was an eternally perfected servant of Krishna and not some person with an obsessive-compulsive neurosis about cleaning. Nor was he a low-level devotee who artificially projected transcendental qualities on matter. He served the object of his worship without the slightest hint of any materialistic attitude, completely absorbed in a transcendental mood of service.” (Anubhasya, 2.14.83)

### **Nityananda visits Panihati**

Mahaprabhu ordered Nityananda Prabhu to take his associates and leave Puri to preach pure devotion in Bengal. While wandering through the Ganges valley, Nitai was attracted by Raghava Pandit’s pure devotional attitude and came to his house in Panihati. Along with him came the three Ghosh brothers, Govinda, Madhava and Vasudeva, who were known for their abilities as kirtaniyas. When they began singing, Nityananda became absorbed in a trance-like state and started to dance. When he had finished dancing, he sat on the deities’ altar and Raghava Pandit and Nityananda Prabhu’s entourage performed an elaborate abhishek ceremony to honor him. After the bathing ceremony, they dressed and garlanded him, whereupon Nityananda sat down again on the deities’ throne while Raghava Pandit held the parasol.

At this moment, a miraculous event occurred. Nityananda Prabhu, still in a trance-like state, ordered Raghava Pandit to quickly bring him a garland of kadamba flowers. Raghava answered that kadamba trees were not yet in flower. Nityananda Prabhu told him to look around the grounds of his house and he would find the flowers. As Raghava searched, he was amazed to find kadamba flowers blossoming on a lime tree. He quickly picked the flowers and made a garland, which he placed around Nityananda’s neck.

A few moments later, the house was filled with the fragrance of damanaka flowers. Nityananda Prabhu said that Mahaprabhu himself had come from Puri wearing a damanaka garland to hear the kirtan. Narahari Chakravarti Thakur mentions this dance and kirtan in his Bhakti-ratnakara:

First Nityananda Prabhu came to Panihati with his associates. Raghava Pandit, Makaradhvaja Kara and the other devotees of the village were overjoyed to see them. Who can describe the wonderful dancing and kirtan that took place in Raghava Pandit's house? (Bhakti-ratnakara 12.3645-7)

Nityananda Prabhu came to Panihati along with Rama Das and Gadadhara Das, where he first visited Raghava Pandit's house. The kirtan that they began there filled the entire universe with transcendental joy. Panihati is the birthplace of the great devotee, Raghava Pandit. There is no limit to the glories of a great devotee's birthplace. (Bhakti-ratnakara 8.156-8)

### **Cira-dadhi Mahotsava**

Later, Nityananda ordered Raghunatha Das Goswami to put on a feast of chipped rice and yogurt for his entourage. Raghava Pandit came there also with various foods that had not been contaminated by the touch of cooked rice. He thus witnessed Nityananda's lila of picnicking by the riverbank in great astonishment. After resting the afternoon by the Ganges, Nityananda went and spent the evening at Raghava Pandit's house in kirtan and dance. Mahaprabhu himself manifested there, being attracted by Nityananda's dancing. In order to reveal the extent of Raghava Pandit's good fortune, Mahaprabhu and Nityananda sat down together and accepted his offerings of fine rice and various vegetable preparations, as well as cakes and sweet rice, all of which was like the nectar of the gods. Overcome with affection for Raghunatha Das, Raghava Pandit gave Mahaprabhu's remnants to him.

Raghava Pandit visited Puri on occasion where he participated with Mahaprabhu in the cleaning of the Gundicha temple, the Rathayatra festival, water sports in the Indradyumna Sarovara, etc. He sang in the chorus with the first group of singers who were led by Svarupa Damodar and in which Advaita Acharya was the principal dancer.

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur has written a few words about

Raghava Pandit's samadhi tomb: "A high platform was built over Raghava Pandit's tomb and it is now overgrown with vines. To the north of the samadhi is a broken down building in which his Madana Mohana deities are present, but much neglected. The service is managed by the principal landlord of Panihati, named Shivachandra Raya Chaudhuri." (Anubhasya, 1.10.24). Srila Prabhupada wrote these lines in 1932. Sixty years later, it appears that the situation has changed. A new temple and residential building have now been constructed on the site of Raghava Pandit's home.

## **Sri Kali Das and Jharu Thakur**

pulinda-tanaya malli kalidaso'dhunabhavat

Kali Das was previously the tribal girl named Malli in Vraja. (Gaura-gaṇoddesa-dipika 190)

Mahaprabhu's devotee Kali Das was born in a kayastha family. His home was in the village of Bheda or Bhaduwa in Hoogly district. This village is about three miles south of Raghunatha Das Goswami's birthplace in Saptagram Krishnapura and one mile west of the present-day Bandel Junction train station. Jharu Thakur, who was born in a sweeper caste (bhuni-mali), lived in the same village. These places are served by the Devanandapura post office. Kali Das's deities used to be worshiped in Shankhanagara village, but they have since been moved to Triveni. Jharu Thakur's deity was named Madana Gopal and is still being worshiped in Bhaduwa.

Krishnadas Kaviraj Goswami has glorified these two devotees in his Chaitanya Charitamrita, in the sixteenth chapter of the Antya-lila. There we learn that Kali Das was related to Raghunatha Das Goswami as a distant uncle.

He was related to Raghunatha Das as an uncle and he made a vow of eating the remnants of the Vaishnavas throughout his life. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.16.8)

Kali Das's devotion to the remnants of the devotees

Kali Das was a great devotee who constantly chanted the Holy Names of

Krishna. He used the words “Hare Krishna” throughout all his activities. His devotion to eating the remnants of the Vaishnavas resulted in his receiving extraordinary blessings from Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. The Lord gives so much mercy to anyone who has faith in the Vaishnavas and eats their remnants that he has nothing left to give.

Therefore, set aside your shame and disgust and eat the Vaishnavas’ remnants, for by so doing you will be able to fulfill all your desires. The remnants of Krishna’s food are called maha-prasad, but the remnants of the devotee are given the name maha-maha-prasad. The dust of a devotee’s feet, the water that has washed his feet, and the remnants of his food are three very powerful aids to spiritual practice. All revealed scriptures loudly declare again and again that one can attain the supreme goal of ecstatic love for Krishna through the use of these three substances. So, my dear devotees, please listen to me, for I insist on this point: keep faith in these three substances and render service to them with complete faith. Through these three substances you will taste the joy of sacred love found in the Holy Name of Krishna and you will win Krishna’s pleasure. This has been proved by the experience of Kali Das. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.16.58-63)

While living in Bengal, Kali Das ate the remnants of all devotees, without taking their caste status into consideration. He would go to their houses with gifts of the finest foodstuffs. After they had finished eating, he would ask for their remnants. If any of them were unwilling to give him their remnants, he would take them without their knowledge. He would hide and wait for them to throw away the leaf-plates on which they had eaten and lick them clean.

### **Kali Das visits Jharu Thakur**

All Vaishnavas are worshipable, irregardless of the caste in which they were born. A Vaishnava is beyond the material qualities and thus is not to be identified with his nationality or caste. Anyone who makes a judgment of a devotee on the basis of the caste into which he was born is said to have a hellish mentality. Though Jharu Thakur was born into the Bhuimali, one of Bengal’s untouchable castes, he was a great devotee.

One day, Kali Das went to Jharu Thakur's house and paid him his obeisances as he sat with his wife. He then made them a gift of some ripe, sweet mangoes. Jharu Thakur recognized Kali Das to be a guest of the highest order. He showed him the appropriate respect and said, "Dear sir, I am of a low caste. Please let me know how I can serve you. Just say the word and I will arrange for food to be cooked for you in a Brahmin's house. If you take prasada there, I will consider myself most fortunate."

Kali Das recognized Jharu Thakur's humility as being appropriate to a Vaishnava and said, "I am extremely fallen. It is only as a result of great good fortune that I have been able to meet you today. If you would only be so kind as to place the dust of your feet on my head."

Jharu Thakur was embarrassed and felt uneasy. Kali Das recited a few verses that glorify the devotees of the Lord:

na me'bhaktas catur-vedi

mad-bhaktaḥ sva-pacāḥ priyaḥ |

tasmai deyaṁ tato grahyaṁ

sa ca puṅgyo yatha hy aham ||

A scholar learned in the four Vedas is not dear to me if he is not my devotee, whereas someone born as a dog-eater who is devoted to me is very dear to me. All respect should be given to such a person, and one should accept his gifts, for such devotees are as worshipable as I am. (Hari-bhakti-vilasa 10.29, Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.16.25)

viprad dvi-ṣaḍ-guṇa-yutad aravinda-nabha-

padaravinda-vimukhaḥ chva-pacāṁ variṣṭham |

manyate tad-arpita-mano-vacanahitārtha-

praṇaṁ punati sa kulaṁ na tu bhuri-maṇaḥ ||

A person born in a Brahmin family and possessing all twelve brahminical qualities, but adverse to the lotus-navelled Lord Krishna's lotus feet, is inferior

to a dog-eater who has dedicated his mind, words, activities, wealth and life to the service of the Lord. Such a person purifies not only his own life but his whole family, whereas one who is proud of his qualifications cannot. (Srimad Bhagavatam 7.9.10, Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.16.26)

aho bata sva-paco'to gariyan

yaj-jihvagre vartate nama tubhyam |

tepus tapas te juhuvuḥ sasnur aya

brahmanucur nama grṇanti ye te ||

How wonderful it is that the dog-eater who always keeps your holy name on his tongue is greater than a Brahmin! Despite his low caste, anyone who chant your names is understood to have performed all kinds of austerities and the great Vedic sacrifices, to have studied all the Vedas, and to have bathed in all the holy places of pilgrimage. They are the real nobility. (Srimad Bhagavatam 3.33.7, Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.16.27).

Though Jharu Thakur accepted the truth of these scriptural statements, he humbly stated that they were not applicable to him. Kali Das respectfully paid his obeisances and withdrew, and Jharu Thakur politely followed him a short distance before returning to his home. Kali Das took this opportunity to take the dust from the Jharu Thakur's footprints and smeared it over his entire body. Desiring to take the Thakur's remnants, he then hid not far from his house.

When Jharu Thakur entered his house, he placed the mangoes in a banana-bark bowl and mentally offered them to Krishna. His wife then took the mango prasad from the bowl and gave them to her husband. Jharu Thakur ate the mango, and after sucking the seed, placed it back in the bowl. She herself took his remnants and then took the mango seeds and skins and threw the bowl into the refuse pit. When she had gone, Kali Das came and sucked on the seeds and even licked the outside of the skins. As he tasted the remnants of the Vaishnavas, Kali Das was overwhelmed with ecstatic symptoms.

This, then, was Kali Das's procedure as he paid obeisances to all the Vaishnavas in Bengal and ate their food remnants.

## **Kali Das receives Mahaprabhu's mercy in Puri**

Every year, the Bengali devotees went to Puri to visit Mahaprabhu. Kali Das went in the second year of this institution. As the Supersoul, the Lord knew of Kali Das's dedication to the devotees' remnants and so he gave him profuse blessings. Whenever Mahaprabhu went on his daily visit to the Jagannath temple, he would be accompanied by Govinda who carried his kamandalu (water pot). Mahaprabhu would wash his feet before entering the temple and the water would run off into a pool situated at the bottom of the twenty-two steps at the northern entrance at the Simhadvara. Mahaprabhu had given Govinda the strict order to not allow anyone to touch the water which washed his feet. For this reason, no one dared to make the attempt. Only a few intimate devotees found ways to get some of this holy liquid.

One day, as Mahaprabhu was washing his feet as usual, Kali Das came there and stretched out his hand to take some of the water. He drank not once, not twice, but three times as Mahaprabhu watched. The Lord only stopped him when he cupped his hands for the fourth time.

The all-knowing Supreme Lord, Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, knew of the faith that Kali Das had in the Vaishnavas. Happy with him for this great virtue, he allowed him to win a blessing impossible for others to achieve. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.16.48-9)

Mahaprabhu returned to Kashi Mishra's house after visiting Jagannath to take his midday meal. Kali Das sat outside the door, hoping to receive some of the Lord's remnants. The Lord knew of his desire and signaled Govinda to bring him his prasada after he had finished eating.

This is the wonderful result of eating Vaishnavas' remnants: through so doing, Kali Das attained Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's supreme mercy. Therefore, set aside your shame and disgust and eat the Vaishnavas' remnants, for by so doing you will be able to fulfill all your desires. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.16.57-8)

## **Sri Pradyumna Brahmachari or Sri Nrisinghananda**

avesas ca tatha jneyo misre pradyumna-sanjnake |

The Lord's avesa manifestation took place in Pradyumna Mishra.

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur has quoted the above verse in connection with Pradyumna Brahmachari and not for the Orissan Pradyumna Mishra who will be described later in chapter 63 of this volume. The Gauḍiṇya Vaiṣṇava Abhidhana has also taken the same position. Hari Das Das there calls Pradyumna Brahmachari the Lord's avesa.

### **The Lord's avirbhava**

sakṣat-darsana, ara yogya-bhakta-jīve |

avesa karaye kahaṇi, kahaṇi avirbhava ||

Lord delivered the fallen souls in three different ways: some places by appearing to them directly in his self-same body, in other places by entering into a worthy devotee, and in still other places by divine epiphany. His principal method of giving salvation was to appear to the conditioned souls in his self-same body, but he also took possession of Nakula Brahmachari's body and made an apparition before Nrsiṅghananda Brahmachari. It is the Supreme Lord's nature to declare, "I shall deliver the people of the world." (Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.2.4-6)

### **The name Nrsiṅghananda**

Mahāprabhu gave Pradyumna Brahmachari the epithet Nrsiṅghananda because of his absorption in the service of Nrsiṅha. He is considered to be one of



Chaitanya's own branches. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 1.10.35, 3.2.53)

Pradyumna Brahmachari considered himself to be the servant of Nrisingha for Nrisinghadeva manifested himself in his body. He remained by Mahaprabhu's side in the consciousness that Nrisingha himself had appeared in the form of a sannyasi. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.3.286-7)

Vrindavan Das Thakur writes in the Chaitanya Bhagavat that Pradyumna conversed directly with Nrisinghadeva. This is mentioned particularly when Pradyumna joined the company of devotees on the annual pilgrimage to Jagannath Puri.

Pradyumna Brahmachari, who talked directly to Lord Nrisingha walked along as a part of the company of devotees. (Chaitanya Bhagavat 3.8.92)

All those people who think that the body of the Lord is a product of the material nature are atheists who have been bewildered by the Lord's illusory energy. They think that these accounts are tall stories they can criticize out of their false sense of being learned. Anyone who lacks faith in the Supreme Lord is an unfortunate beggar who is cheated of any worthwhile achievement in life, and who gains nothing but the birth and death that are the lot of the conditioned soul.

### **The power of Pradyumna's meditation**

When Mahaprabhu took sannyas in Katwa, he made off for Vrindavan, but Nityananda Prabhu tricked him into coming back to Shantipur to the house of Advaita Acharya. Afterwards, the Lord continued to Puri in the company of Nityananda Prabhu, Jagadananda Pandit, Mukunda Datta and Damodar Pandit. Shortly thereafter, he left Puri on a pilgrimage through southern India. On his return from South India, he planned a trip to Vrindavan that would take him on the route along the Ganges through Bengal. On this trip, he stopped at the house of Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya's brother, Vidya Vachaspati in Vidyanagara, delivered Devananda Pandit and Chapal Gopal from their offenses in Kuliya village, and then met Rupa and Sanatan Goswamis for the first time in Ramakeli.

As Mahaprabhu made this trip, Pradyumna Brahmachari meditated on him, visualizing himself placing jeweled bricks on the road on which the Lord was walking to make his journey more agreeable. When the Lord reached Kanair Natshala, about 200 miles north of Calcutta in the Santal Paragana district of Bihar state, five miles from the town of Rajmahal, Pradyumna's meditation suddenly broke. He was immediately able to understand that the Lord would only go as far as Kanair Natshala on this occasion and no further.

It is said that mental service like that performed by Nrisingha Brahmachari in this meditation is superior to service performed with actual ingredients. Rupa Goswami makes this point in his *Bhakti-rasamṛta-sindhu* (1.2.182), where he gives the example of the Brahmin from Pratishtānpura who attained the association of Narayan in Vaikuntha as a result of mental service or *manasi seva*.

### **Pradyumna brings the Lord to Kumarahatta**

On one occasion, Mahaprabhu was attracted by Nrisinghananda's love to come to Kumarahatta and to appear in the house of Shivananda Sena. This story has been told beautifully by Krishnadas Kaviraj Goswami in the second chapter of the *Antya-lila* of his *Chaitanya Charitamrita*.

One year, as Shivananda Sena's nephew Srikanta Sena left Puri, Mahaprabhu told him to convey the message to the Bengali devotees that there was no need for them to come to Puri that year, for he himself would be visiting Bengal in the month of Paush. When Srikanta came with this news, all the devotees were jubilant in expectation of the Lord's visit. But when the month of Paush had almost come to an end and there was no sign of Mahaprabhu, Shivananda Sena, Jagadananda Pandit and the others who had been waiting anxiously were disheartened by his non-arrival.

At that time, Nrisinghananda happened by and asked everyone the reason for their unhappiness. When he heard that they were disappointed that the Lord had not come, he assured them that he would be able to make Mahaprabhu appear there within three days. Since Shivananda and Jagadananda knew Nrisinghananda's spiritual powers, they believed him.

Nrisinghananda sat down and stayed absorbed in meditation for two days, after which he told Shivananda that Mahaprabhu had arrived in Panihati and that by noon of the next day he would be in Kumarahatta. He ordered Shivananda Sena to supply him with the ingredients for a feast in honor of the Lord. He personally started cooking early in the morning and made a large variety of preparations that he distributed onto three plates to make offerings to Jagannath, Nrsinghadeva and Mahaprabhu. As soon as he sat down in meditation for the offerings, Mahaprabhu personally appeared and ate all three plates, leaving no remnants.

Although Nrisinghananda was overjoyed to see the Lord accept his offerings, he made a pretense of disappointment. He said, since Mahaprabhu and Jagannath are ontologically non-different, there was no fault in his eating the plate set out for Jagannath. But why had he taken the offering intended for Nrsingha? “Nrsinghadeva has fasted today,” he said. Indeed, the Lord performed this pastime in order to show that he is not different from Jagannath or Nrsinghadeva.

After eating, Mahaprabhu left for Panihati. Nrisinghananda cried out in distress, causing Shivananda to inquire what was the cause of his troubles. Nrisinghananda answered that the Lord had alone eaten all three plates, leaving Jagannath and Nrsinghadeva to fast. Shivananda Sena had some doubts, but on his request provided him with foodstuffs to prepare a second offering. The brahmachari cooked once again and made an offering to Nrsinghadeva.

The next year, when Shivananda Sena went with the Bengali devotees to Puri, everyone was duly astonished to hear the Lord himself volunteer the information that he had been to Shivananda’s house in the month of Paush and had eaten the delicious offerings made by Nrisinghananda.

One day, the Lord was engaged in conversation in the presence of all the devotees and suddenly began to praise Nrisinghananda’s qualities. He said, “Last year in the month of Paush, Nrisinghananda gave me delicious sweetmeats and vegetables such as I had never eaten.” Hearing this, all the devotees were struck with wonder and Shivananda was finally convinced that the incident was true. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.2.76-78)

## Sri Gadadhara Das

radha-vibhuti-rupa ya chandrakantiḥ pura sthita |  
sadya gaurāṅga-nikaṭe dasa-vamśyo gadadharaḥ ||  
purnananda vraje yasid baladeva-priyagraṇiḥ |  
sapi karya-vas ad eva pravisaṭ taṁ gadadharam ||

She who during Krishna's incarnation was Candrakanti, the manifestation of Radharani's opulence, has become Gadadhara Das by Gauranga's side. Balaram's beloved Purnananda has also entered into him for some special purpose. (Gaura-gaṇoddesa-dipika 154-155)

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur has made the following comments on Gadadhara Das's identity in Krishna lila: "He is Srimati Radharani's effulgence. Just as Srila Gadadhara Pandit Goswami is Srimati Radharani herself, so Gadadhara Das is an incarnation of her bodily luster. In the Lord's incarnation as Krishna with the emotions and bodily luster of Srimati Radharani, he is that bodily luster. In the Gaura-gaṇoddesa-dipika, he is said to be the manifestation of Radha's opulence. He is counted amongst the followers of both Gaura and Nityananda. As a follower of Gaura, he relished the mood of conjugal love, while as a follower of Nityananda, he is in the mood of pure devotional service in friendship, etc. Although Gadadhara Das was an associate of Nityananda, his mood of friendship is not that of a cowherd boy, but is in the conjugal mood. He established the temple of Gauranga in Katwa." (Anubhaṣya to Chaitanya Charitamrita 1.10.53)

Gadadhara Das's home was in Eriyadaha, a village situated 8 miles north of Calcutta on the banks of the Bhagirathi River. He moved to Katwa from Nabadwip after Mahaprabhu's disappearance, and then later to Eriyadaha. In the Gauḍiya Vaiṣṇava Abhidhana, it is said that Gadadhara Das supervised Sachi Mata and Vishnupriya Devi's affairs. When they disappeared, he moved to Katwa where he established the worship of the Gauranga deity. The temple is currently known in Katwa as Mahaprabhura Bari.

Gadadhara Das first met with Mahaprabhu when the Lord was making his first

attempt to travel to Vrindavan by taking the route through Bengal, first stopping in Shantipur, then Kumarahatta and then Raghava Pandit's house in Panihati. Mahaprabhu affectionately placed his lotus feet on Gadadhara's head:

When he heard that Mahaprabhu had arrived at Raghava Pandit's house, Gadadhara ran to see him. Gadadhara is extremely dear to Mahaprabhu, his body is charged with the joy of devotion. When the Lord saw the pious Gadadhara, he lifted his feet and placed them on his head. (Chaitanya Bhagavat 3.5.92-4)

When Mahaprabhu sent Nityananda from Puri to Gauḍadesa to preach the religion of love, Gadadhara Das, Rama Das, Krishna Das Pandit, Paramesvari Das, Purandara Pandit, Raghunatha Vaidya, etc., accompanied him. On the road from Nilachala, Nityananda and his associates displayed various extraordinary moods of divine love. Gadadhara Das, the eternal resident of Vraja took on the transcendental mood of Srimati Radharani, and in this ecstasy of a cowherd girl began to laugh and shout, "Yogurt for sale! Yogurt for sale! Does anyone want to buy some yogurt?" In the mood of a cowherd boy, Abhirama Das Thakur stood for nine hours in the three-fold bending form. Krishna Das and Paramesvari Das were also in the mood of cowherd boys, shouting "Hoi! hoi!" as though they were herding the cattle. Purandara Pandit climbed up a tree and shouted, "I am Angada!" and then jumped down to the ground.

The mood of Radhika descended on Gadadhara Das. He began to call, "Who will buy yogurt?" and burst out laughing.... Krishna Das and Paramesvari both shouted "Hoi! hoi!" in the spirit of the cowherd boys. (Chaitanya Bhagavat 3.5.238, 240)

When Nityananda Prabhu arrived in Bengal, he visited villages on both banks of the Ganges. Gadadhara Das was still experiencing gopi-bhava and took a jug full of Ganges water and called out to everyone, "Milk! Who wants to buy milk?" When Nityananda saw Gadadhara Das's bhava, he took the Gopal deity from his house and danced, holding it to his chest.

In the mood of a gopi, Gadhadhara Das had no consciousness of external reality. He constantly referred to himself as a gopi. (Chaitanya Bhagavat 3.5.381)

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur writes in his commentary to this verse that though Gadadhara considered himself to be a gopi, he did not dress like a woman. His mood was expressed internally and he had no need to

make any artificial, external display.

One day, Nityananda was in the audience at a performance of Krishna's dana-lila by Madhavananda Ghosh at the house of Gadadhara Das, and he went into a deep trance. For this reason, Gadadhara's house is also known as the place of the dana-lila. The dana-lila is described elaborately in Rupa Goswami's Dana-keli-kaumudi. In Gadadhara Das's village of Eriyadaha, there were many people antagonistic to religion who hated the very sound of the congregational chanting of Krishna's names. One of these people was a powerful Muslim administrator, or Kazi. Gadadhara was once in an ecstatic mood and walked right into the house of this Kazi, singing the holy names at the top of his voice. The Kazi was sitting there in the company of his inner circle. Gadadhara ordered the Kazi to chant the holy names. The Kazi became very angry at the affront, but when he saw that Gadadhara was in a trance-like state, he calmed down and asked him why he had come. Gadadhara Das answered, "Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and Nityananda Prabhu have descended to this earth to make everyone chant the Holy Names. Only you have not chanted Krishna's names, so I have come here to make you do so. If you chant the Holy Names, all your sins will be eradicated." Although the Kazi was by nature cruel, he laughed and said, "Alright, I will chant Krishna's Names tomorrow. Now go home. Gadadhara Das danced jubilantly and said, "Why tomorrow? You have just spoken the name of Krishna! Now that you have taken the name of Hari, you will never again know any inauspiciousness!" (Chaitanya Bhagavat 3.5.409-10)

Gadadhara Das thus converted the irascible Kazi through his otherworldly power. This impossible task became possible because his body had become possessed by Krishna.

This is the glory of Gadadhara Das, who has been counted as one of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's intimate associates. Just seeing him in his ecstatic devotional mood erases all of one's sinful reactions. (Chaitanya Bhagavat 3.5.413, 727)

Krishnadas Kaviraj Goswami has also written as follows about Gadadhara Das in the Chaitanya Charitamrita:

Sri Rama Das and Sri Gadadhara Das were both devotees of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and stayed by his side. When the Lord ordered Nityananda to return to Bengal, he told both of them to accompany him. Gadadhara Das was always in an ecstatic state in the devotional mood of a gopi. Nityananda put on the dana-

lila performance in his house. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 1.11.13-17)

The Lord ordered Nityananda, “Go to Gauḍadesa. Spread the pure love of Krishna everywhere. I am giving you Gadadhara Das and Rama Das and some other devotees to act as your assistants. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.15.42-2)

When Raghunatha Das Goswami put on the Cīṛa-dadhi Mahotsava in Panihati on Nityananda’s order, Gadadhara was also present there. Yadunandana Das was Gadadhara Das’s disciple. This is stated in the Bhakti-ratnakara:

Yadunandana Chakravarti was a very learned scholar whose guru and worshipable lord was Gadadhara Das. (Bhakti-ratnakara 9.352)

Gadadhara Das’s disappearance day is on the eighth day of the waning moon of the month of Karttik. Srinivas Acharya put on a huge festival on the occasion of Gadadhara Das’s disappearance day. Like the festival at Kheṭuri, this one was greatly renowned throughout the Vaishnava community.

What can I say about the Kṛṣṇaṣṭami day of Karttik? My prabhu disappeared here on that day. (Bhakti-ratnakara 9.362)

Gadadhara Das’s samadhi tomb is situated on the grounds of the Mahaprabhu Bari temple in Katwa, where Keshava Bharati gave sannyas to Mahaprabhu.

## **Sri Vasudeva Datta Thakur**

vraje sthitau gayakau yau madhukaṇṭha-madhuvratau |

mukunda-vasudevau tau dattau gauraṅga-gayakau ||

In Vraja there were two singers named Madhukantha and Madhuvrata. They appeared in Chaitanya lila as Mukunda and Vasudeva Datta, who were singers in the society of Lord Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. (Gaura-gaṇoddesa-dipika 140)

## **Vasudeva's family background**

Sri Vasudeva Datta was born in the Chittagong district of modern Bangla Desh, in the village of Chanhara, which is under the jurisdiction of the police station named Patiya. This village is situated ten krosas, or about twenty miles, from the village of Mekhala where Pundarika Vidyanidhi made his home. Mahaprabhu's associate Mukunda Datta was Vasudeva Datta's brother.

In the book *Prema-vilasa*, it is said that Vasudeva was the older of the two and that they were born in an Ambashtha family:

In the district of Chittagong, there is a village named Cakrashala where a respectable family of Ambashtha physicians named Datta live. Two great devotees named Mukunda Datta and Vasudeva Datta were born into this family. Both Vasudeva the older and Mukunda the younger came to Nabadwip to live.

## **Vasudeva the kirtaniya**

Vasudeva Datta Thakur had a beautiful voice and was also well versed in the *Saṅgita-sastra*. He was one of the chief associates of Mahaprabhu, participating in sankirtan in the home of Srivasa and the streets of Nabadwip. Mahaprabhu enjoyed his association because of his Vaishnava qualities.

Vasudeva Datta is a respected servant of the Lord. A thousand tongues are insufficient to sing his glories. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 1.10.41)

Mahaprabhu said, "Even though Mukunda has been my companion since childhood, I get even more pleasure when I see you." (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.11.138)

Vasudeva had a particularly close friendship with Srivasa Pandit and Shivananda Sena. He lived near Kumarahatta and Kanchra Para (Kancanapalli) which were the homes of these two great associates of the Lord. Vasudeva was very generous



by nature. Never thinking of himself, he spent his money liberally for others. Mahaprabhu saw this and asked Shivananda Sena to become his sarkhel and supervise his affairs.

### **Vasudeva's compassion**

Vasudeva was so distressed by the suffering of the living beings that he was ready to accept their sins and suffer in hell, and he prayed emotionally to Mahaprabhu for such a boon:

“My Lord! You have appeared in this world to save it, so please accept my prayer. You are omnipotent and all-merciful, so if you agree to fulfill my request, it can be easily done. When I see the suffering of the world, my heart is torn apart. So I ask you, Lord, give their sins to me. I will take their sins and suffer in hell on their behalf, but please deliver them from their material disease.”  
(Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.15.160-163)

He wished to take the sins of every single living being and suffer in hell in their place so that they could be liberated. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 1.10.42)

When Mahaprabhu heard this emotional plea on behalf of the living beings of the world, he said to Vasudeva:

“You have desired the liberation of all the living beings in the entire universe, so it will be. They will be saved without having to suffer the consequences of their sins. Krishna is not incapable of doing it, he has all powers, so why should he make you suffer for their sins? Those whose welfare you desire will all become Vaishnavas, and Krishna removes the sins of all those who are Vaishnava.”  
(Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.15.167-169)

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur writes in his Anubhasya to the Chaitanya Charitamrita: “In the Western world, Christians believe that only their guru, Jesus Christ, appeared in this world out of a desire to suffer on behalf of the people of the world by accepting their sins. But here we see that amongst Mahaprabhu's associates, Vasudeva Datta Thakur, like Hari Das Thakur, showed

a compassion millions of times greater and more generous, as he was willing to suffer in the place of all creatures in the universe. By so doing, he taught the world the unlimited nature of the Vaishnava's selfless love."

Raghunatha Das Goswami's diksha guru, Yadunandana Acharya, was blessed by Vasudeva Datta. The author of Chaitanya Bhagavat, Vrindavan Das Thakur, was born in Mamgachi in Modadrumadvipa, one mile from the Purvasthali station on the Howrah-Katwa line of the Eastern Railway. Vasudeva Datta consecrated the worship of the Madana Gopal deity which is still being worshiped at this site.

We can see just how dear Vasudeva Datta was to Mahaprabhu by the Lord's statements made when he was visiting Srivasa Pandit's house in Kumarahatta :

Gaurachandra repeated again and again, "This body of mine belongs to Vasudeva. If he wants to sell me, I allow myself to be sold; I will not do otherwise. This is the truth which I announce to you all. If someone has even come into the briefest contact with Vasudeva Datta, he will be protected by Krishna. Listen all you Vaishnavas! I tell you the truth: this body of mine belongs to Vasudeva alone." (Chaitanya Bhagavat 3.5.27-30)

## **Srila Mahesh Pandit**

mahesa-panḍitaḥ sriman-mahabahuḥ vraje sakha /

In Vraja, Mahesh Pandit was Krishna's cowherd friend, Mahabahu. (Gaura-gaṇoddesa-dipika 129)

Mahesh Pandit was one of the Dvadasa-gopala, or twelve cowherd boys. His home (Sripat) was first situated in Masipura across the river from Jirat on the eastern bank of the Ganges. When Masipura fell into the river, the Sripat was moved to Beledanga near Sukhasagar. Here too, the banks of the Ganges fell into the river causing the destruction of the village. Once again the Sripat was moved, this time to its present location in Pal Para. This last move took place in the Bengali year 1334, or 1927 AD. Pal Para is situated within the Pancanagara administrative block. Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur

mentions in his commentary to Chaitanya Charitamrita 1.10.32, that this final resting place for Mahesh Pandit's Sripat was Kanthal Puli near Chakdaha. Mahesh Pandit is also considered to be a branch of both Nityananda and Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. Some people say that he was the youngest brother of Jagadisa Pandit, whose Sripat is at Jashra. According to this opinion, there were three brothers in the family, Jagadisa, Hiranya and Mahesh.

The Sripat is a small construction in the style of an ordinary residential building. It houses Gaura-Nityananda deities, as well as Sri Gopinath, Madanamohana, Radha Govinda and a Salagrama sila. In front of the temple building is a memorial to Mahesh Pandit, his puṣpa-samadhi.

Sri Mahesh Pandit participated in the Cira-dadhi Mahotsava ("the festival of chipped rice and yogurt") in Panihati, after which he followed Nityananda Prabhu to Saptagram. He was present in Khardaha when Narottama Das Thakur came there to pay a visit (Bhakti-ratnakara 8.220) Mahesh Pandit, like all of Nityananda Prabhu's associates, resembled him in being extremely magnanimous and devoted to the salvation of all the fallen living beings. In his ecstasies of devotional love, he would dance madly.

Mahesh Pandit was a magnanimous cowherd boy. In his love for Krishna, he would dance to the sound of kettledrums like a madman. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 1.11.32)

His name is also mentioned in Chaitanya Bhagavat; Vrindavan Das Thakur calls him a great soul, parama-mahanta (Chaitanya Bhagavat 3.6). His disappearance day is celebrated on the thirteenth day of the dark moon in Paush.

## **Sri Gauri Das Pandit**

subalo yaḥ priya-sreṣṭhaḥ sa gauridasa-panḍitaḥ |

In Vraja, Gauri Das Pandit was Subala, one of the twelve Gopals. He is one of Nityananda Prabhu's dearest associates. (Gaura-gaṇoddesa-dipika 128)

Gauri Das Pandit was most fortunate. His body, mind and soul were all devoted to Nityananda Prabhu. (Chaitanya Bhagavat 3.5.730)

### **Gauri Das's temple in Ambika**

Gauri Das's first residence was in the village known as Shaligram, not far from Muragacha. Later he moved to Ambika Kalna in Burdwan district, where his Sripat is extremely well known. His father's name was Kamsari Mishra and his mother was Kamala Devi. Kamsari Mishra belonged to the Vatsa gotra, and their family name was Ghoshal. Gauri Das was the fourth of six sons. His three older brothers were named Damodar, Jagannath and Surya Das. Surya Das had the title sarakhela<sup>1127</sup> A military title, "commander," also used for estate managers.

<sup>1127</sup> and gave his two daughters, Vasudha and Jahnava in marriage to Nityananda Prabhu. Gauri Das Pandit's younger brothers were named Krishna Das Sarkhel and Nrisingha Chaitanya.

Sarkhel Surya Das Pandit was a very magnanimous person. His younger brother was named Gauri Das. Gauri Das Pandit took permission from his older brother before moving from Shaligram to Ambika. (Bhakti-ratnakara 7.330-1)

Gauri Das and his disciple Hridaya Chaitanya left only a line of initiated disciples and not one of family descendants. According to the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava Abhidhana, Gauri Das Pandit and his wife Vimala Devi had two sons, Balaram and Raghunatha. Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur, however, did not accept the validity of this family connection. He has written as follows in his Anubhaṣya: "Gauri Das Pandit's disciple was named Hriday Chaitanya. His disciple was the son of Gauri Das Pandit's daughter Annapurna Devi, Gopiraman. It is the family descendants of this Gopiramaṇa who are the current owners of the Ambika Sripat." (Anubhaṣya to Chaitanya Charitamrita 1.11.26)

The current temple at Ambika houses deities of Gauri Das, Radha-Krishna, Gaura-Nityananda, Jagannath, Balaram, and Rama-Sita. As one enters the temple grounds, there is a large tamarind tree. It is said that Mahaprabhu and Gauri Das met under this very tree. Other valuable items held in the temple are a

paddle said to be used by Mahaprabhu himself and a Bhagavad-Gita said to have been handwritten by the Lord.

One day Gauranga crossed the Ganges from Shantipur to visit Ambika. He told Gauri Das Pandit, “I was in Shantipur and from there I went to Harinadi village and took a boat to come here. I have brought one of the paddles with me--here, take it. Use it to take the fallen living beings across the river of material suffering.” So saying, the Lord embraced him. (Bhakti-ratnakara 7.333-6)

Fortunate souls can still see the Gita that the Lord gave to Gauri Das, as well as the paddle when they visit the deities in Ambika. (Bhakti-ratnakara 7.341)

Nityananda Prabhu made no distinctions between those who were qualified or unqualified, but simply gave Krishna prema to everyone as though intoxicated. His intimate associate, Gauri Das Pandit, similarly displayed a great power in preaching.

Gauri Das was possessed of great spiritual power. He was able to give or take Krishna prema to anyone. He surrendered everything he had to Nityananda and made Chaitanya and Nityananda the masters of his life and soul. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 1.11.26-7)

Surya Das Sarkhel’s house and temple are also in Ambika, a little to the west of Gauri Das Pandit’s Sripat. Bhagavan Das Babaji’s ashram is also a little further west of there.

## **Mahaprabhu visits Kalna**

A wonderful story is told about Mahaprabhu and Gauri Das Pandit in Ambika Kalna. It is said that on the day that Mahaprabhu paddled across the Ganges to come to visit Gauri Das, he sat under the tamarind tree. Gauri Das asked for Mahaprabhu to stay permanently there in Ambika. In order to fulfill his devotee’s desire, Mahaprabhu revealed that his form and that of Nityananda Prabhu were in a nearby neem tree. It is also said that when these deities were being carved, Nityananda was physically present. Conquered by Gauri Das’s

love for them, the deities would physically eat everything that he offered to them.

When Mahaprabhu and Nityananda Prabhu were about to leave, Gauri Das did everything in his power to hold them back. Mahaprabhu calmed him by saying, “Nityananda and I are directly present in these forms. You can tell either the deities to go, or we can leave. You choose.” Naturally, Gauri Das chose the real Gaura-Nitai to stay and said that the deities could leave. So this is what happened, demonstrating the truth of the Chaitanya Charitamrita’s statement:

nama vighraha Svarupa, ei tina eka-rupa |

tina bheda nahi tina cidananda-rupa ||

These three, the name, the deity form and the original form of the Lord, are all one. No distinction should be made between them, for all three are of transcendental, spiritual substance. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 17.131)

Jahnava Devi cried when she saw the samadhi tomb of her uncle in Vrindavan.

When she saw Gauri Das Pandit’s samadhi, torrents of tears fell from her eyes and she could do nothing to stop them. (Bhakti-ratnakara 11.259)

Gauri Das Pandit Goswami disappeared in the month of Shravan on the sukla dvadasi, the twelfth day of the waxing moon.

## **Sri Abhirama Thakur (Sri Rama Das)**

pura sridama-namasid abhiramo’dhuna mahan |

dvatrimśata janair eva vahyaṁ kaṣṭham uvaha saḥ ||

He who was previously known as Sridama is today Abhirama Thakur. He picked up a piece of wood that it took 32 men to lift. (Gaura-gaṇoddesa-dipika 126)

Abhirama Thakur lived with his wife Malini in the village of Khanakul Krishnanagara in the Hooghly district. Khana refers to the Dvarakesvara River, kula means banks; thus, the village of Krishnanagara on the banks of the Dvarakesvara River is also known as Khanakula Krishnanagara. At the doors of his temple stands a large Bakula tree which is known as the Siddha-bakula, and the place is popularly called Siddha-bakula Kunja. This is the place where Abhirama Thakur first sat down when he arrived in the village. The Gopinath deity was found when digging for a tank first began. This tank goes by the name of Sri Abhirama Kund. The temple also houses the deities of Vrajavallabha, Gopal and a Salagram Sila.

Sri Abhirama Thakur was a very vigorous and powerful acharya. He engaged in preaching on the orders of Lord Nityananda and saved many atheists and people opposed to the Vaishnava religion.

Abhirama Goswami possessed a fiery temper and great spiritual power. The atheists trembled whenever they saw him. He was intoxicated as though he had been possessed by Nityananda, and his enchanting mercies are famed throughout the world. (Bhakti-ratnakara 4.103-4)

Rama Das Abhirama was fully absorbed in the mood of friendship. He lifted a flute which contained sixteen knots. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 1.10.116)

This reference in the Chaitanya Charitamrita is also that found in the Gaura-gaṇoddesa-dipika which says that Abhirama Thakur lifted a log which would normally have taken 32 people to lift. The Bhakti-ratnakara states that it would have taken hundreds of people. After lifting it, he held it like a flute.

He held in his hands a piece of wood that a hundred men could not move, in the way one holds a flute. (Bhakti-ratnakara 4.123)

The devotees were greatly astonished when they saw him perform such superhuman feats. According to one legend, whenever Abhirama Thakur paid his obeisances to a stone or statue, if it was not a Vishnu-sila or a consecrated

deity, it would crack or be reduced to powder. Non-devotees were also unable to tolerate his praṇamas. Nityananda's son Virachandra Goswami and daughter Ganga Devi survived his obeisances, which confirmed their divinity. These things are written in aṣṭakas composed by Abhirama Thakur in their name.

Srila Abhirama Thakur possessed an amazing whip which he named Jaya-maṅgala. Anyone who was touched by this whip would immediately experience the transcendental ecstasies of prema. One day Srinivas Acharya visited Abhirama Thakur who gave him three lashes with that whip. Abhirama's wife Malini stopped her husband from hitting him again, saying that Srinivas was just a young lad who wouldn't be able to tolerate the effects of divine love. Nevertheless, Srinivas Acharya was very dear to Abhirama and received many blessings from him. Though not his initiated disciple, he was like a disciple to him. The Jaya-maṅgala whip is still held in the Krishnanagara temple.

In the Bhakti-ratnakara, the following statement is also made:

O Srinivas! How much more can I say? Abhirama descended into this world in order to deliver it. Taking birth in a Brahmin family, he became a scholar in all the scriptures and was an unequalled musician, not only in song and playing musical instruments, but in dance also. He married at Nityananda Balaram's request. His wife Malini is also indescribably powerful. (Bhakti-ratnakara 4.105-8)

Many people say that the Bali Math in Puri was established by Abhirama Thakur. An annual festival is held in Khanakula Krishnanagara on his disappearance day, i.e., the Chaitra kṛṣṇa saptami.

Our parama-guru, Jagad-guru Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur visited this site when travelling on the parikrama of Sri Gaura Maṇḍala. At that time, the devotees charged with the temple greeted him with great hospitality and honored him and his followers with special treatment.

**Sri Paramesvara Das Thakur (Sri Paramesvari Das)**



namnarjunah sakha prag yo dasa sa paramesvarah |

Paramesvara Das Thakur was previously Arjuna, one of Krishna's twelve cowherd boyfriends. (Gaura-gaṇoddesa-dipika 132)

Srila Paramesvari Thakur appeared in a Vaidya family. He made his home in Antpur, a village which was previously known by the name of Bishakhali. The Antpur station is on the on the Champadanga branch of the Howrah-Amta rail line. Paramesvari Thakur's Sripat is not far from the train station and near the old Radha Govinda temple established of the diwan or chief minister of Burdwan's king, Tej Bahadur.

After the Lord took sannyas in Katwa, he headed for Vrindavan in a state of divine intoxication before being diverted to Advaita Acharya's house in Shantipur by Nityananda Prabhu. Sachi Mata and the other devotees from Nabadwip all came to see the Lord there. At his mother's request, Mahaprabhu agreed to stay in Puri and took the path through Chatrabhoga to Nilachala in the company of Nityananda, Mukunda, Jagadananda and Damodar.

The first time that the Lord wished to go to Vrindavan from Nilachala, he came through Bengal, though he was eventually unsuccessful, he passed through Panihati, Kumarahatta, Kuliya, Ramakeli, Kanair Natshala, Shantipur, etc., before returning to Puri. When Nrisinghananda Brahmachari heard that Mahaprabhu was going to Vrindavan, he meditated on the Lord's route, imagining a road of jewels as far as Kanair Natshala, when he realized that this was as far as the Lord would go, that he would not make it to Vrindavan this time. Thousands of people were accompanying the Lord at this time. When he arrived at Kanair Natshala, he remembered Sanatan Goswami's advice,

“To go on pilgrimage with such a large company of devotees is not recommended. You are going to Vrindavan with an entourage of hundreds and thousands of people, and this is not a fitting way to go on a pilgrimage.”  
(Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.1.222-4)

On his way back to Nilachala, Mahaprabhu stopped at Advaita's house in Shantipur. This time he was accompanied by Balabhadra Bhattacharya and Damodar Pandit. When the Lord returned from Gaya, he also went as far as Kanair Natshala where he had a vision of Muralidhara Sri Krishna, who

embraced him before he disappeared (Chaitanya Bhagavat 2.2.179-85). Once he returned to Nilachala, Mahaprabhu told Nityananda Prabhu to go with his own associates to Bengal to deliver the lowborn, foolish and fallen people. Amongst his associates at that time were Sri Rama Das, Gadadhara Das, Raghunatha Vaidya, Krishna Das Pandit, Paramesvari Das and Purandara Pandit. While travelling with Nityananda, these devotees displayed various ecstatic moods. These are described in the Chaitanya Bhagavat:

Krishna Das Pandit, Paramesvari Das and Purandara Pandit were all enthusiastic to join Nityananda. So all of his personal associates accompanied him on this journey back to Bengal. Before starting off, Nityananda first empowered them by saturating them with Krishna prema. They all completely forgot their external identities. There was no end to the variety of ecstatic moods that manifested in each one of their bodies. (Chaitanya Bhagavat 3.5.232-235)

Paramesvari Das and Krishna Das both shouted “Hoi! Hoi!” in the spirit of cowherd boys. (Chaitanya Bhagavat 3.5.240)

Paramesvari Das was one of the most important of Nityananda Prabhu’s companions, who appeared specifically to enrich his pastimes. Nityananda Prabhu considered him to be his very own life. This too is stated in the Chaitanya Bhagavat:

Paramesvari Das is Nityananda’s life. Nityananda used his body as an extension of his own. (Chaitanya Bhagavat 3.5.732)

It is also stated in the Chaitanya Bhagavat that Mahaprabhu manifested himself in the Gauranga deity Paramesvari Das worshiped in Antpur.

Purandara Pandit and Paramesvari Das both saw the manifestation of Gaurachandra in the deity. As soon as they saw him, they ran towards him and fell down, crying in the ecstasy of love. (Chaitanya Bhagavat 5.95-6)

It is said in the Bhakti-ratnakara that Paramesvari Das was in the entourage of Nityananda’s shakti, Jahnava Mata, when she went to the Kheturi festival.

Jahnava Ishvari happily walked in the company of Gauranga, Nakari Krishna Das, Damodar, Paramesvari, the learned Balaram, Mukunda, Vrindavan Das, etc. (Bhakti-ratnakara 10.376-7)

Sri Paramesvari Das Thakur also accompanied Jahnava Mata on her last trip to Vraja Dhama and witnessed her merging into the body of Radhika in the Gopinath temple. He established the worship of Radha-Gopinath deities in Antpur on Jahnava's order.

Once back from Vraja, Paramesvari Das stayed for some time in Khardaha and Garalagacha village in Puri district. When Narottama Das came to Khardaha, he gave him directions to Puri.

In Chaitanya Charitamrita, it is written that just by remembering Paramesvari Das one can attain love for Krishna.

Paramesvari Das took exclusive shelter of Nityananda Prabhu. Whoever remembers him attains devotion to Krishna. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 1.11.29)

Sri Paramesvari Das had miraculous powers. On one occasion, Harinama-sankirtan was being at the house of Kamalakara Pippalai in the town of Akna Mahesh situated near Serampore. Paramesvari was dancing in ecstasy during the kirtan. Hearing the sounds of the kirtan and seeing the ecstatic dancing caused some of the local atheists to become very envious. They decided to pollute the kirtan area and to teach the devotees a lesson, so they threw a dead jackal in the midst of the kirtan group. But Paramesvari did not stop dancing for a moment. By the force of his kirtan, the jackal came back to life and started to howl along with the kirtan. The other devotees were astonished by this display of power and overcome by transcendental joy. This has been mentioned in the Vaishnavavandana:

I very attentively worship Paramesvari Das, who made a jackal come back to life during sankirtan.

In front of the temple in Antpur are two huge bakula trees and a kadamba tree. Between them is the samadhi tomb of Paramesvari Das, over which is a tulasi altar. It is said that bakula trees grew from the branch of a tree that grew there during the time of Paramesvari Thakur. Every year, the kadamba tree produces a flower that is used for the worship of the deities. Paramesvari Thakur's tirobhava festival is held every year on the vaisakhi purṇima.

## Sri Uddharan Datta Thakur

Uddharan Datta was the best amongst the bhagavatas, who served Nityananda's lotus feet in every way possible. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 1.11.41)

Whenever the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Sri Krishna, adopts the emotional nature and bodily luster of Srimati Radharani in order to become Sri Krishna Chaitanya, he is always accompanied by his eternal associates who join him in order to enrich his pastimes. Thus, Krishna's primary expansion or prakasa, Baladeva, accepts the attitude of a devotee and the form of Nityananda, appearing in Ekachakra village in order to embellish Mahaprabhu's lila. He too has his entourage of personal confidantes who descend to this earth to assist him in playing his role. Nityananda is Baladeva tattva, i.e., he is none other than Lord Seṣa, the source of three puruṣavatara, Maha Sankarshan's causal form or mula Sankarshan. His chief companions are known as the Dvadasa-gopals or twelve cowherd boyfriends. Thus it is stated in the Gaura-gaṇoddesa-dipika (129):

subahur yo vraje gopo datta uddharaṇakhyakaḥ |

The cowherd named Subahu became Uddharan.

Uddharan Datta Thakur is thus one of the twelve Gopals. In order to assist Nityananda in his incarnation, he took birth in the town of Saptagram in Hooghly district, near the Trishbigha railway station in the year 1481 AD. His parents were named Srikara and Bhadravati of the gold merchant class. Any caste in which a Vaishnava appears is to be considered holy -- the earth itself is blessed by the appearance of a Vaishnava and his/her mother has achieved the perfection of motherhood. Vrindavan Das has written in the Chaitanya Bhagavat as follows:

Nityananda remained a few days in Khardaha and then went on to Saptagram with his troupe of associates. The Lord stayed at the house of the fortunate Uddharan Datta on the banks of the Triveni. Completely surrendered to the feet of Nityananda Prabhu, Uddharan Datta worshiped him without any false

pretense... The entire caste of gold merchants was purified by the presence of Uddharan Datta in its midst, of this there can be no doubt. (Chaitanya Bhagavat 3.5.443, 449-50, 453)

jati-kula saba nirarthaka janaite

janmailena haridase mleccha-kulete

In order to show that one's caste and family background are completely irrelevant, Hari Das took birth in an outcaste family.

Sri Krishna Chaitanya and Nityananda wanted to teach that a great devotee may appear in any family in any caste, and so they had some of their devotees take birth in such households.

One who takes birth in a low-class family is not disqualified from performing devotional service, nor is one who born in a pure, high-class brahminical family automatically qualified for such service. Whoever engages in the worship of the Lord is a great person; one who does not worship is rejected. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.4.66-7)

arcye siladhir guruṣu nara-matir vaiṣṇave jatibuddhir

viṣṇor va vaiṣṇavanam kalimala-mathane padatirtha “mbubuddhiḥ |

sri-viṣṇor namni mantre sakala-kaluṣahe sabda-samanya-buddhir

viṣṇau sarvesvareṣu tad-itara-samadhir yasya va naraki saḥ ||

Anyone who considers the deity to be nothing but stone,  
the guru to be an ordinary human being,  
or the Vaishnava to be a member of a particular caste or race,  
who takes the holy water which has washed  
Vishnu or the Vaishnava's feet

and can destroy all the sins of the age of Kali,  
to be ordinary water,  
who thinks that the name or mantra of Vishnu,  
which destroys all evils, is the same as any other sound,  
or who takes Vishnu to be equal to anything other than him,  
has a hellish nature. (Padma-purāṇa)

Anyone who sees a Vaishnava in terms of his material birth is destined for a hellish existence. Subahu took birth in a family of gold merchants, but this does not mean that he was a gold merchant -- he was an eternal associate of the Lord beyond the material qualities. One cannot understand the underlying nature or ontological aspect of the Lord and his devotees by using the gross or subtle material senses; one can only get a superficial understanding of their morphological aspect, i.e., their external aspect. The true nature of the devotee and the Supreme Lord is revealed to the surrendered heart. If Uddharan Datta Thakur is merciful, one can understand his transcendental nature and his divine glories.

Amongst deities, Vishnu is supreme. Only by uttering the name of Vishnu can all of one's sins be burned up, all inauspiciousness in one's destiny be destroyed and auspiciousness gained. A single utterance of the name of Rama equals a thousand repetitions of the name of Vishnu.

rama rameti rameti rame rame manorame |

sahasra-namabhis tulyaṁ ramanama varanane ||

Oh sweet-faced Durga, I take great pleasure in chanting the names of Rama, Rama, Rama. A single utterance of the name of Rama is equivalent to a recital of the thousand names of Vishnu. (Padma-purāṇa, Uttara-khaṇḍa, 72.335; Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.9.32)

sahasra-namnaṁ puṇyanāṁ triravṛttya tu yat phalam |

ekavṛttya tu kṛṣṇasya namaikāṁ tat prayacchati ||

The fruits of three recitals of the thousand names of Lord Vishnu are attained by a single utterance of the name of Krishna. (Brahmaṇḍa-purāṇa, Laghu-bhagavatamṛta. 1.631, Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.9.33)

Even though the name of Krishna and the Krishna-mantra are supremely powerful, offenses are taken into consideration in its chanting. Even negligent chanting of the Holy Name (namabhasa) can destroy all sins and give one liberation. Nevertheless, if one commits offenses, the benefits of namabhasa are lost. Lord Krishna withholds his mercy from the offensive person. The difference between a sin (papa) and an offense (aparadha) is the following: an improper act committed toward a conditioned embodied being is a sin, whereas a similar improper act committed toward Vishnu or the Vaishnava is an offense. An offense has more grave consequences than a sin. Ajamila was a great sinner, but because he had committed no offenses, he was delivered by the power of namabhasa. Lord Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and Nityananda Prabhu delivered everyone, both sinners and offenders.

There are offenses to be considered while chanting the Hare Krishna mantra. Therefore simply by chanting Hare Krishna, the offender does not become ecstatic. But these considerations do not exist where Lord Chaitanya and Nityananda are concerned. So as soon as one chants the name, he feels the ecstasy of love for God. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 1.8.24,31)

Bhaktivinoda Thakur glosses this verse as follows: “If one takes shelter of Lord Chaitanya and Nityananda in faith, his is very quickly cleansed of all offenses. Thus as soon as he chants the Hare Krishna Maha Mantra, he feels the ecstasy of love for God.”

Krishnadas Kaviraj Goswami has glorified Nityananda Prabhu’s quality of being merciful to the most fallen in the following words:

Because he is intoxicated by ecstatic love and is an incarnation of mercy, Lord Nityananda does not distinguish between the good and the bad. He delivers all those who happen to come before him and therefore he has delivered such a sinful and fallen person as me. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 1.5.208-9)

Srila Vrindavan Das Thakur has particularly given extensive glorifications of Nityananda Prabhu. The sinful and offensive living beings of this world have no alternative but the mercy of Nityananda Prabhu if they want to be delivered. Even though Nityananda is bhagavat-tattva, he behaves as a devotee. All of his associates are expansions of his mercy. Nityananda Prabhu is said to be the deliverer of the most fallen; his companions seek out even more fallen souls to deliver. In fact, Nityananda distributes his mercy to the conditioned souls through his devotees. As one of Nityananda's closest confidantes, Uddharan Datta Thakur is called parama-parama-patita-pavana, "the deliverer of the most fallen of the most fallen". Thus any jiva who takes shelter of Uddharan Datta Thakur is quickly delivered from his material entanglements and attains the service of Nityananda Prabhu and Gauranga Prabhu's lotus feet. Therefore Krishnadas Kaviraj Goswami describes him as the best of the maha-bhagavatas and Vrindavan Das Thakur writes in the Chaitanya Bhagavat:

Uddharan Datta is a great and magnanimous Vaishnava, who has a title to the service of Nityananda Prabhu.

From a superficial point of view, Uddharan Datta worked as the manager of a big zamindar (Nairaja) of Naihati, about one and a half miles north of Katwa. The relics of this royal family are still visible not far from the Dain Hat station. The village where Uddharan Datta Thakur lived while acting as the manager of the estate was named Uddharan-pura.

Though he possessed a vast fortune, Uddharan Datta renounced all sense gratifications, dedicating all of his sense activities to the service of Nityananda Prabhu. Being controlled by the love of his devotee, Nityananda enjoyed the foodstuffs that Uddharan had cooked.

The Lord grabs the offerings given him by his devotee. That which is given him by a non-devotee is of no interest to him.

Saptagram stands on the banks of the Saraswati River. At Uddharan Datta's Sripat, one can still see the six-armed figure of Mahaprabhu that he personally



worshiped. On the right side of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu is a deity of Sri Nityananda. On another altar are the figures of Radha Govinda and a salagrama sila, and below the throne is a picture of Sri Uddharan Datta Thakur. After Uddharan Datta disappeared, Jahnava Devi made an auspicious visit to his home.

Krishnadas Kaviraj Goswami writes in the Chaitanya Charitamrita that his brother did not have as much faith in Nityananda Prabhu as he had in Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. This was the cause of an argument between his brother and Nityananda's follower Minaketana Rama Das. Krishnadas took Rama Das's side in this argument and rebuked his brother. Nityananda Prabhu was pleased with Krishnadas for having supported his devotee, even though this was a fairly ordinary qualification. Nityananda gave Krishnadas a vision of himself, the right to live in Vrindavan and service to the lotus feet of Radha and Krishna. The conclusion is this that if we worship Uddharan Datta Thakur, serving him and try to please him, we will quickly be able to get the mercy of Lord Nityananda Prabhu, through which we will become eligible to attain love for Krishna and thus perfect our lives. In order to attract people to Uddharan Datta's Sripat it is necessary to make repairs to the buildings on the site. Through this, people will become aware of his glories and will seek his mercy and become blessed. If one makes an effort to serve the devotee, then he will give the commensurate power to serve.

In front of the Saptagram temple, a large hall has been constructed, in front of which is a shady, cool terrace covered by a madhavi creeper.

Srinivas DattaThakur was Uddharan Datta's only son. Their descendants have spread into many branches and today live in Calcutta, Hooghly and many other places. Those who have taken birth in this family are doubtlessly very fortunate individuals. We pray that they abandon the superficial illusory family connection and establish their transcendental relation with him.<sup>1138</sup>The following comments are added in A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami's commentary on Chaitanya Charitamṛta 1.11.41: "When we returned from America in 1967, the executive committee members of this temple invited us to visit it, and thus we had the opportunity to visit this temple with some American students. Formerly, in our childhood, we visited this temple with our parents because all the members of the suvarṇa-vaṇik community enthusiastically take interest in this temple of Uddharan Datta Thakur. In the Bengali year 1283 (AD 1876) a babaji named Nitai Das arranged for a donation of twelve bighas of land for this temple. The

management of the temple later deteriorated, but then in 1306 (AD 1899), through the cooperation of the famous Balaram Mullik of Hooghly, who was an assistant magistrate, and many rich suvarṇa-vaṇik (gold merchant) community members, the management of the temple improved greatly. Not more than fifty years ago, one of the family members of Uddharan Datta Thakur named Jagamohana Datta established a wooden murti (statue) of Uddharan Datta Thakur in the temple, but that murti is no longer there; at present, a picture of Uddharan Datta Thakur is worshiped. It is understood, however, that the wooden murti of Uddharan Thakur was taken away by Sri Madana-mohana Datta and is now being worshiped with a Salagram Sila by Srinath Datta."

Uddharan Datta Thakur left this world in the Saka year 1463 (1552), on the kṛṣṇa trayodasi of the month of Paush.

## **Sri Purushottam Das**

sadasivasuto namna nagaraḥ puruṣottamaḥ /

vaidya-vaṁsodbhavo namna dama yo vallavo vraje //

Nagara Purushottam was previously the cowherd named Daman in Vraja. He is now born in a Vaidya family as the son of Sadashiva. (Gaura-gaṇoddesa-dipika 131)

Dama was one of the twelve Gopals and a companion of Krishna in his childhood pastimes in Vraja. In the eleventh chapter of the Adi-lila of Chaitanya Charitamrita, Krishnadas Kaviraj Goswami has listed Purushottam Das is included amongst the devotees of Lord Nityananda.

++Sadasiva Kaviraj was a great personality. Purushottam Das was his son. From birth, Purushottam Das was absorbed in the service of the lotus feet of Lord Nityananda Prabhu, and he always engaged in childish play with Lord Krishna. His son was named Sri Kanu Thakur, a very respectable gentleman. His body was saturated with the nectar of love for Lord Krishna. (Chaitanya Charitamrita

1.11.38-40)

Vrindavan Das Thakur has also named Purushottam Das as one of Nityananda Prabhu's chief associates.

++Sadasiva Kaviraj was very fortunate to have a son like Purushottam Das. Purushottam Das had no external consciousness of his body, for Nityananda Prabhu is constantly acting through him. (Chaitanya Bhagavat 5.741-2)

For four generations, the family of Purushottam Thakur consisted of eternally perfect direct associates of Mahaprabhu: Kamsari Sena, Sadashiva Kaviraj, Purushottam Thakur, and Kanu Thakur. The Gaura-gaṇoddesa-dipika identifies Kamsari Sena as Ratnavali Sakhi and Sadashiva Kaviraj as Candravali (156).

Purushottam Thakur's wife was named Jahnava Devi. She died while her son, Kanu Thakur, was just a young child. Nityananda Prabhu named the boy Sisu Krishnadas. It is said that Nityananda Prabhu's wife Jahnava Devi adopted Kanu and took him with her to Vrindavan. Some say that he was also one of the twelve Gopals. One legend about Kanu Thakur holds that when in Vrindavan, while he was dancing in kirtan, his ankle bell flew off. He vowed that he would make his residence wherever the ankle bell was recovered. The ankle bell was found in the town of Bodhkhana in Jessore district and so he established his Sripaṭa there. In the opinion of some, Madhavacharya (Madhava Caṭṭopadhyaya) of Jirat in Hooghly district, the husband of Ganga Devi, Nityananda Prabhu's daughter, was Purushottam Thakur's disciple.

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur has the following to say about Purushottam Thakur's Sripaṭa: <Purushottam Das Thakur lived at Sukhasagara, midway between the Chakdaha and Simurali railway stations. The deities installed by Purushottam Thakur were formerly served in Beledaṅga village, but when the temple fell into the river, the deities were taken to Sukhasagara. That temple was also swallowed by the Ganges and so the deities were brought with Jahnava-mata's deity to Sahebaṅga Berigrama. Since that place also has been destroyed, all the deities were again moved about three or four miles to the village named Chandure-grama, on the banks of the Ganges about one mile up from Pal Para.> (Anubhaṣya 1.11.39)

Devakinandana Das, the author of the Vaishnava-vandana has mentioned there that he was a disciple of Purushottam Thakur.

+++I worship Sadashiva Kaviraj with great attentiveness. He was constantly intoxicated with love and had no external consciousness.... I worship my worshipable Lord, Purushottam Thakur. Who can list his incomparable qualities. He was merciful to those who were devoid of any good qualities, displaying the natural power of his compassion. When only seven years old, he was so intoxicated with love for Krishna that he danced in a way which enchanted the entire world.

In the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava Abhidhana, the following supplementary information is given: <Some people say that Purushottam's surname was Nagara, while others say that the name Nagara comes from the name of the area where he lived. Since the five villages (Beleḍaṅga, Beṛigrama, Sukhasagara, Manasapota and Pal Para) are so close together, this area is sometimes called Nagara-desā. Once he ate snake poison when in a trance state without experiencing any ill effects. This was a source of great astonishment to all those who witnessed it. Many of Nityananda Prabhu's associates often displayed such miraculous powers.

## **Sri Kamalakar Pippalai**

kamalakaraḥ pippalai-namnasid you mahabalaḥ |

+++Nityananda's associate Kamalakara Pippalai was one of the twelve Gopals, formerly known as Mahabala. (Gaura-gaṇoddesa-dipika 128)

+++Kamalakara's behavior was extraordinary. It is well-known throughout the world that his love for Krishna is extraordinary. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 1.11.24)

+++The cowherd boy who was known as Mahabala in Vrindavan is now known as Kamalakara Pippalai. Day and night he sang the glories of Radha and Krishna and is counted as one of Nityananda's branches. He lived in Mahesa on the west bank of the Ganges where he served a deity of Jagannath. (Vaiṣṇavacara-darpaṇa)

+++Kamalakara Pippalai was born in Akna Mahesa and lived in Jagesvara.  
(Sripaṭa-paryāṭana)

In the Gauḍiṃya Vaiṣṇava Abhidhana, Kamalakara's birth year is given as 1492 AD. His father was a rich landlord. He was born in the village known as Khalijhuli in the Sundarban area. He had a younger brother named Srinidhipati Pippalai. They belonged to a Brahmin family of the Rarha branch.

Though born in Khalijhuli, he moved to the village of Mahesa, which is about 2 1/2 miles from the Serampore railway station in Hooghly. The famous Jagannath deity in Mahesa was consecrated by him. Prior to Kamalakara's arrival, the area around Mahesa was nothing but jungle, but he had the land cleared and made into a model village whose fame spread everywhere.

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur has told two stories about Kamalakara Pippalai in his Anubhaṣya to the Chaitanya Charitamrita:

(1) When Kamalakara Pippalai left home his younger brother Nidhipati Pippalai searched for him and in due course of time found him in the village of Mahesa. When his brother refused to return despite his remonstrances, Nidhipati Pippalai came to live in Mahesa with all his family members. His descendants still reside in the Mahesa area, where they consist of some twenty households.

(2) There was once a vairagi named Dhruvananda who went on pilgrimage to Puri. It was his strong desire to offer Lord Jagannath food that he had cooked with his own hands. Jagannath appeared to him in a dream one night and told him to go to Mahesa on the the Ganges and when Jagannath was installed there, his wish to cook and make an offering to him would be fulfilled. When Dhruvananda came to Mahesa, he saw Jagannath, Balaram and Subhadra floating in the Ganges. He picked them out of the water and had a small hut built where he could shelter and worship them. As he neared his death and was searching about for a suitable replacement for himself to take care of the deities, Jagannath once again appeared to him in a dream and said, <My devotee, a great Vaishnava named Kamalakara Pippalai, lives in the village of Khalijuli in the Sundarban. I have ordered him in a dream to come here and take over my service. When he comes, you should turn the responsibility for caring for me over to him.>

The next morning, Kamalakara Pippalai, who had indeed had such a

dream, arrived there and Dhruvananda immediately gave him charge of the worship of Jagannath, Baladeva and Subhadra. Having been empowered in this way to serve the Lord, Kamalakara Pippalai took the title Adhikari, and this title has been used as the family name ever since. The Pippalai name belongs to one of the fifty-five branches of the Rarha Brahmins.>

The devotee is always anxious to serve the Lord, so the Lord gives him directions for service, and never to a non-devotee. Kamalakara was gratified to have received Lord Jagannath's order, and immediately abandoned his home and family to go to Mahesa. The conditioned souls are normally so attached to the pleasures of their gross and subtle senses that the mere mention of service to Krishna and the Vaishnavas fills their hearts with fear. They consider it to be a burden and look for any excuse to avoid such service. Because it does not contribute to the gratification of the senses, they do not consider service to Vishnu and the Vaishnavas to be a wealth or a source of profit in the way that a Vaishnava does. To the eyes of the world, a Vaishnava may be playing the role of a family man, but he is not of the same order as a worldly householder. Sometimes it is the Lord's wish that someone take a wife and have a family, but even though he is externally subject to the same conditions that an ordinary materialists because his mind is absorbed in separation from the Lord. Thus, as soon as he receives direction from the Lord, he enthusiastically abandons his material connections and becomes fully engaged in the Lord's service. This renunciation of family life is not painful as it is for one on the jnana-yoga path, but is natural and spontaneous.

The Vijaya-khaṇḍa says that Nityananda gave Panihati over to Kamalakara.

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur has noted a few of the generations which descended from Kamalakara. He had a son named Caturbhuja, who in turn had two sons, Narayan and Jagannath. Narayan's son was named Jagadananda whose son was Rajivalocana. During Rajivalocana's lifetime, service to the Jagannath deity was at first hampered by a shortage of finances. The Nawab of Dhaka, Wali Shah Suja, donated 1185 bighas of land in the Bengali year 1060 (1653 AD). This land is found in the area of Jagannathpura, about 2 1/2 krosas from the Mahesa temple. The village was named Jagannathpura after the deity.

The Gauḍiya Vaiṣṇava Abhidhana cites the the following verses from

Nityananda-vaṁsa-vistara:

+++A pure-hearted Brahmin who regularly worshiped Vishnu and the Vaishnavas lived in the town of Mahesa. He was Pippalai's son-in-law named Sudhamaya. His wife was Vidyunmala.

Thus, Vidyunmala, Kamalakara Pippalai's daughter, married Sudhamaya Caṭṭopadhyaya. They had a daughter named Narayaṇi Devi. Virabhadra Prabhu later married this Narayaṇi Devi. The descendants of the Pippalai family in Mahesa say that this girl's name was Radharani. On the other hand, Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur has said that Virabhadra Prabhu married Srimati, who was the daughter of Yadunatha Acharya and his wife Vidyunmala, as well as their adopted daughter, Narayaṇi.

The Vaiṣṇavacara-darpaṇa also states that a highly qualified Brahmin named Yadunandana was married to Kamalakara Pippalai's daughter Vidyunmala. Yadunandana thus had a great devotee of Jagannath, who knew nothing but the desire to serve Jagannath, as his father-in-law.

Kamalakara was present in Panihati at the Daṇḍa-mahotsava of Raghunath Das. He also came to the renowned festivals at Kheturi and Katwa. He joined Jahnava Devi to go there, as his name is mentioned in this connexion in Bhakti-ratnakara (10.375).

According to the Vaiṣṇavacara-darpaṇa, he left for Vrindavan after giving his daughter away in marriage where he lived until the end of his days. According to the tradition maintained by his descendants, the disappearance day of the founder of their line was Caitri Sukla-trayodasi of the year 1563 AD.

## **Thakur Sri Saraṅga (Sri Sarṅga Thakur)**

\*vraje nandimukhi yasit sadya saraṅga-ṭhakkuraḥ /

\*prahlado manyate kaiscin matpitra sa na manyate //

+++Vraja's Nandimukhi became Saraṅga Thakur in Gaura-lila. Some people say

that he is Prahlad, but that is not the opinion held by my father. (Gaura-gaṇoddesa-dipika 172)

Sri Saraṅga Thakur is mentioned in the listing of branches of the Chaitanya trunk of the tree of devotional service along with Rama Das, Kavidatta, Gopal Das and Bhagavata Acharya (Chaitanya Charitamrita 1.10.113). He is also known as Sarṅga Thakur, Sarṅgadhara and Sarṅgapaṇi. He used to live in Godrumadvipa, which is the island in Nabadwip which represents, of the nine types of devotional service, the service attitude. The name of the town is Mamagachi. He would sit in a secluded place by the banks of the Ganges to meditate and chant the holy names. Through these practices he obtained many miraculous powers.

At first, Saraṅga Thakur did not want to make any disciples for fear of disturbances to his bhajana, but Mahaprabhu repeatedly encouraged him to do so. The following account is given in the Gauḍiya Vaiṣṇava Abhidhana, <When the Lord was criticizing Devananda Pandit for having offended Srivasa Pandit, Saraṅga Thakur met him on the streets of Nabadwip. Mahaprabhu ordered him to give up his determination to never take disciples.>

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur writes in his Anubhaṣya: <Having been ordered by Mahaprabhu to take disciples, Saraṅga Thakur decided that he would make a disciple of the first person that he met the following morning. As fate would have it, the next morning, a dead body washed up against him while he was taking bath in the Ganges. He revived the corpse and made him his disciple. This disciple was known as Thakur Murari, or sometimes as Sarṅga Murari.

In the Gauḍiya Vaiṣṇava Abhidhana, it is further said that Murari was a boy who had been killed by snakebite and his parents had set his uncremated body afloat on a raft in the Ganges, as was the custom in that time. Saraṅga Thakur himself become an empowered preacher of Mahaprabhu's dharma. Descendents of his disciples still live in a village named Sava (<corpse>).

Sarṅga Thakur's deities were served in the town of Mamagachi. The original temple was built in front of a bakula tree. The deities of Radha Gopinath can be seen in this temple, as can the deity of Mahaprabhu's other parshad, Vasudeva Datta Thakur, Sri Madana Gopal. The devotees who do parikrama of Nabadwip Dhama visit this temple for darshan. Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati



Goswami Thakur established a temple not far from the above-mentioned home of Sarāṅga Murari at the birthplace of Vrindavan Das Thakur.

Saraṅga Thakur disappeared on the thirteenth day of the waning moon in the month of Agrahayan. An alternative opinion is that he disappeared on the Asharh Kṛṣṇa caturdasi.

## **Sri Kaliya Krishna Das (Kala Krishna Das)**

\*kalaḥ sri-kṛṣṇadāsa sa yo lavaṅgaḥ sakha vraje /

+++In Vraja, Kala Krishna Das was Krishna's cowherd friend named Lavaṅga. (Gaura-gaṇoddesa-dipika 132)

+++Kaliya Krishna Das was known throughout the three worlds. One can attain Gauracandra through remembrance of him. (Chaitanya Bhagavat 3.5.740)

Lavaṅga Sakha is one of the twelve Gopals. His Sripaṭa is in the town of Akai Haṭa, within the jurisdiction of Katwa just off the road which leads from Nabadwip to Katwa. It is about two miles south of the Katwa train station and one mile north of Dain Haṭa station. Near the Sripaṭa is a tank called Nupur Kund. It is said that the ankle bell of Raghunandan Thakur, the son of the Khaṇḍavasi Mukunda, fell here. Others say that it was Nityananda Prabhu's ankle bell.

In his Anubhaṣya commentary to the Chaitanya Charitamrita, Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur has written: <In the opinion of the Goswamis of the Sonatala village on the north bank of the Icchamati River about three miles west of Beṛabandar in Pabna district, Kala Krishna Das was a Brahmin of the Varendra group, of the Bharadvaja gotra and the Bhadaḍa grama. Kala Krishna Das went to Pabna to preach the chanting of the holy names. There are still the ruins of the buildings where he built his asrama. Later, members of his family came to live there. Since there were no other Brahmins of the Varendra group in Akai Haṭa, he came there to marry. Afterwards he returned to

Akai Haṭa and finished his days in Vrindavan.>

He had two sons named Sri Mohana Das and Sri Gauranga Das, or Vrindavan Das. Their descendants still live in the Sonatala village. There they celebrate Kala Krishna Das's disappearance day on the twelfth day of the waning moon in the month of Agrahayan. The deity which he worshiped was named Kala Chand.

+++Kala Krishna Das was the best of the Vaishnavas. He knew nothing other than Nityananda Prabhu's lotus feet. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 1.11.37)

When Jahnavā Devi came to Katwa, Kala Krishna Das was in her entourage.

+++They all arrived in Kaṇṭaka Nagara (Katwa) with company of many devotees, including Kala Krishna Das from Akai Hata. (Bhakti-ratnakara 10.409)

The Kala Krishna Das who accompanied Sri Chaitanya Mahāprabhu to Southern India was not the same personality. (Cf. Anubhāṣya, 2.7.39)

## **Srila Dhananjaya Pandit**

\*vasudama sakha yas ca paṇḍitaḥ sri-dhananjayaḥ ||

+++Krishna's friend Vasudama became Dhananjaya Pandit in Gaura-lila. (Gaura-gaṇoddesa-dipika 127)

+++Dhananjaya Pandit was Nityananda Prabhu's dear servant; he was very renounced and full of love for Krishna. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 1.11.31)

Opinions vary about Dhananjaya Pandit's birthplace and his parentage. In the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava Abhidhana, it is said that he was born in the village of

Jaṛagrama in Chittagong district on the fifth day of the waxing moon in the month of Chaitra, 1485. His father's name was Sripati Bandopadhyaya, his mother, Kalindi Devi. His wife was Haripriya.

In the book Gauranga Madhuri, another version is given: He was born in the village of Siyan Muluk, near Bolpur in the Birbhum district. His father's name was Adideva Vacaspati and his mother, Dayamayi. Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur subscribes to the former view in his Anubhaṣya.

Dhananjaya Pandit's primary home was in the village of Sitalagrama which is served by the Kaicara post office in the precinct of Maṅgalakoṭa, district of Burdwan. Sitalagrama is about one mile north of the Kaicara railway station, nine miles west of Katwa on the narrow gauge line to Burdwan city. He is also said to have had homes in the village of Saṅcara Paṅcara and Jalandi. This first of these villages lies two miles south of Satadeula Tajapura, which is four miles from the Memari train station. Jalandi is about 10 miles east of Burdwan city and is served by Lokanagara post office. The home of Sanjaya Pandit is also found in this village who is said by some to have been Dhananjaya's brother and by others his disciple. Dhananjaya had no descendants. Those who supervise the Sitalagrama temple are descendants of his disciples.

Both the Gauḍiya Vaiṣṇava Abhidhana and Gauranga Madhuri agree that Dhananjaya Pandit was married and that his wife's name was Haripriya. It is also mentioned that he would prostrate himself in obeisances before Tulasi Devi three times a day. He was married when very young, but this did not stop him from leaving on a pilgrimage shortly after his wedding. His wealthy father gave him money for travelling expenses, but Dhananjaya gave it all to Mahaprabhu and carried only a begging bowl. This particular action has been recalled by the author of the Vaishnava-vandana:

\*vilasi vairagi vandoṇ paṇḍita dhananjaya |

\*sarvasva prabhure diya bhaṇḍa hate laya ||

Dhananjaya's main home or sripaṭa in Sitalagrama. The deities of Gopinath, Nitai-Gauranga and Damodar which he worshiped are still being served there. These deities are brought into a field not far from the temple where the disappearance day festival is held annually in the middle of Magh.

Dhananjaya Pandit participated for a few days with Mahaprabhu in his

sankirtan pastimes in Nabadwip. From there he returned to Sitalagrama whence he went on a pilgrimage to Vrindavan. Before travelling to Vrindavan, he stayed for a few days in Sañcara Pañcara, leaving a disciple who was travelling with him in charge of the deity service. At present, there is no further sign of this temple in Sañcara Pañcara.

Nityananda Prabhu delivered the most fallen and crushed the atheistic. These powers were manifest in his dear devotee, Dhananjaya. Dhananjaya Pandit converted many robbers and atheists in the Sitalagrama area.

+++Dhananjaya Pandit was an extraordinarily great Vaishnava. Nityananda took up permanent residence in his heart. (Chaitanya Bhagavat 3.5.773)

As one enters the Sitalagrama temple, a small Tulasi altar stands on the left. This is the site of Dhananjaya Pandit's samadhi tomb.

His disappearance day is the Sukla-aṣṭami of Karttik month.

## **Sundarananda Thakur**

\*pura sudama-namasid adya sundara-ṭhakkuraḥ |

+++Sundarananda Thakur was previously one of the twelve Gopals known as Sudama. (Gaura-gaṇoddesa-dipika 127)

Sundarananda is counted amongst the branches of Nityananda Prabhu.

+++Sundarananda is Nityananda's branch, a true servant. Nityananda joked with him in the Vrindavan mood. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 1.19.23)

+++Sundarananda is an ocean of sacred rapture. He is chief amongst the associates of Nityananda Prabhu. (Chaitanya Bhagavat 3.5.728)

His home was in the village of Maheshpura in Jessore district. Maheshpura stands on the Vetravati River, fourteen miles east of the Majdiya railway station. Only his place of birth remains there at present.

His deities were named Radha-vallabha and Radha-ramaṇa. Their priests later moved these deities to Saidabad and installed a wooden deity in Maheshpura.

Sundarananda never married and thus has no descendants. Descendants of his disciples continue to maintain the site in Maheshpura. Some relatives of his established a temple in Maṅgaladihi in Birbhum district.

Sundarananda possessed great mystic powers. He made kadamba flowers bloom on a lime tree, which he later used in the service of Radha-ramaṇa, as is stated in the Vaishnava-vandana:

+++I worship Sundarananda Thakur in great hope who made a kadamba flower bloom on a lime tree.

On another occasion he dove into a river and pulled a crocodile out. He resembled Nityananda Prabhu in being a savior of the most fallen.

His disappearance took place on the full moon day of Karttik month.

## **Sri Minaketan Rama Das**

\*amuṁ pravisaṁ karyat saḥajau nisaṭholmukau |

\*minaketana-ramadir vyuhaḥ saṅkarṣaṇo'paraḥ ||

+++The two brothers Nisaṭha and Ulmuka entered into the expansions of

Nityananda as Minaketan and Rama, etc. (Gaura-gaṇoddesa-dipika 68)

### **Rama Das, a devotee of Nityananda**

Though the Gaura-gaṇoddesa-dipika here indicates that Minaketan and Rama Das are two different people, it is clear from the Chaitanya Charitamrita and the Bhakti-ratnakara that Minaketan Rama Das is one single individual. Perhaps both Nisāṭha and Ulmuka, participants in Baladeva-lila, entered into the body of Minaketan Rama Das during Gaura-lila.

Nothing is known about the details of Minaketan Rama Das's birthplace or his parents. From the account of Krishnadas Kaviraj Goswami, it would appear that his home was somewhere in the vicinity of Krishnadas's residence in Jhamaṭapura.

He was one of the associates of Nityananda who went to Kheturi with Jahnava Devi. Narahari Chakravarti writes that the three worlds are purified by the sight of Vaishnavas like Minaketan Rama Das:

+++The great devotees all joined together to go to Kheturi. Seeing them, the entire universe is sanctified. Minaketan Rama Das, Abhiram Thakur, Murari Chaitanya, Jnana Das, Mahidhara, Saṅkara, Kamalakara Pippalai, Nrisingha Chaitanya, Jiva and Kanai Pandit. (Bhakti-ratnakara 10.372-5)

Krishnadas Kaviraj Goswami recounts some details about Minaketan Rama Das in his Chaitanya Charitamrita in the course of glorifying Nityananda Prabhu. Just as Nityananda Prabhu was an avadhuta, his follower Minaketan also behaved in the manner of an avadhuta. Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur discusses the word avadhuta in his commentary: <The word avadhuta is defined by Sridhara Svami in his commentary to SB 3.1.19 by the words asaṁskṛta-deha, or <<one who does not take care of his body>> Nityananda Prabhu was an avadhuta, and his disciple was also an eternally perfect, maha-bhagavata paramahansa like him--beyond the varṇasrama system. As a result, none of the

characteristics of any of the castes or states of life were manifest in his body. He was completely absorbed in the mood of Vraja and had no consideration whatsoever for the duties of the body.> (Anubhāṣya, 1.5.161).

### **Rama Das at Jhamatapura**

On one occasion, Minaketan Rama Das was invited to attend an all-night kirtan at Krishnadas Kaviraj's home in Jhamatapura. The other guests were impressed by his appearance and his display of transcendental emotions and came to pay their obeisances to his feet. In his ecstatic mood, he would sometimes hit the person prostrated before him with his flute, sometimes slap him. Occasionally, he would even climb onto some other devotees' shoulders. Tears poured from his eyes like the uninterrupted flow of a river. Seeing this, other devotees' also felt their eyes fill with tears. All the eight amazing manifestations of ecstatic love appeared in his body. When he shouted the name of Nityananda in this state, all the devotees felt their hearts fill with a divine ecstasy.

Guṇarṇava Mishra was engaged as a pujari in Krishnadas's house. This Brahmin was a kaniṣṭha adhikari and had faith in the deity but was unable to recognize the devotee and did not have much enthusiasm to pay him proper respect. Minaketan Rama Das was able to understand that this Guṇarṇava Mishra had no faith in Nityananda Prabhu and that for this reason he was deliberately ignoring him because he was Nityananda's disciple. In order to teach the world, Rama Das said,

+++<Just look! A second Romaharṣaṇa Suta who did not come forward to show respect when he saw Balaram!> (Chaitanya Charitamrita 1.5.170)

Romaharṣaṇa was seated on the Vyasasana and engaged in reciting the Bhagavat at the request of the assembled sages in Naimiṣaraṇya when Baladeva himself appeared there. All the other sages stood up to show Lord Balaram the appropriate respect, with the exception of Romaharṣaṇa. For this, he was punished. Someone who is proud has no authority to speak on the Bhagavat, nor, for that matter, is he authorized to worship the deity. The Bhagavat is identical to Krishna himself. However, in this case, the pujari Guṇarṇava Mishra did not

object to Rama Das's chastisement and simply continued in the performance of his service to the Deity.

At the end of the kirtan festival, however, Minaketan Rama Das got into an argument with Krishnadas Kaviraj's brother. Krishnadas's brother had strong faith in Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, but lacked such faith in Nityananda Prabhu. When Rama Das discovered this, he broke his flute in anger and left the place. The result of this curse was that Krishnadas's brother was doomed to destruction. Krishnadas Kaviraj himself rebuked his brother, an act which pleased Lord Nityananda who came to him in a dream and told him to go to live in Vrindavan.

The above account reveals how dear Minaketan Rama Das was to Nityananda Prabhu. Nityananda's followers are like him: they are deliverers of the most fallen and capable of fulfilling all desires.

## **Sri Uddhava Das**

\*srīman uddhava-daso'pi candravesavatarakaḥ |

+++Uddhava Das is an avesa incarnation of the Moon-god. (Gaura-gaṇoddesa-dipika 192)

In the Chaitanya Charitamrita (1.12.83), it is said that Uddhava Das is a branch of Gadadhara Pandit Goswami. As such, he is mentioned by Yadunatha Das in the Sakha-nirṇayamṛta (35):

\*ati-dinajane purṇa-prema-vitta-pradayakam |

\*srīmad-uddhava-dasakhyam vande'ham guṇa-salinam ||

+++I venerate the highly virtuous Uddhava Das, who gave the wealth of love to those who were most fallen.



When Rupa Goswami was old and living in Vrindavan, he was desperate to see the deity, but unable to go to Govardhana because of his advanced years. At this time, Gopal came to stay in Mathura at the house of Viṭṭhalanatha, the youngest son of Vallabhacharya, ostensibly out of fear of possible attacks by the Muslim iconoclasts. Rupa Goswami thus had the opportunity to see Madhavendra Puri's deity. Uddhava Das was amongst the devotees who stayed with Rupa at Viṭṭhaladeva's house for an entire month on this occasion. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.18.51, Bhakti-ratnakara 5.1333)

Uddhava Das lived in Vrindavan. When Srinivas Acharya and Raghava Goswami were touring Vraja dham, they came to his cottage. He greeted them with enthusiastic hospitality. Uddhava Das was amongst the devotees who gathered to wish Srinivas Acharya, Narottama Das Thakur and Shyamananda Prabhu as they set off for Bengal with the books which had been given to them by Jiva Goswami. (Bhakti-ratnakara 6.514)

According to the Gauḍiya Vaiṣṇava Abhidhana, there are at least two devotees named Uddhava Das. One was a follower of Sanatan Goswami who worshiped in Vraja on the banks of Pavana Sarovara; another was an initiated disciple of Radhamohana Thakur who wrote many songs about Radha-Krishna lila. He lived in Murshidabad district in the village of Tenagram. His real name was Krishnakanta Majumdar.

## **Kurma Vipra**

When Mahaprabhu decided to deliver the people of the South, he left Puri on the pretext of going on pilgrimage in the month of Vaisakh. At Nityananda Prabhu's request, he accepted Krishnadas Vipra as a servant. Distributing prema to all as he passed, he arrived in the place known as Kurmasthana where he bestowed his blessings on the Vedic Brahmin also named Kurma.

Krishnadas Kaviraj Goswami has not given anything more than this Brahmin's name in his account of this event in his Chaitanya Charitamrita.

Though many devotees descended to this world to participate in the Lord's pastimes, the worldly identity of many of them remains unfortunately unknown. There is not much possibility that historians will ever be able to unearth any more information about this Kurma Vipra's background. Detailed knowledge about the Lord's associates' worldly identities is far less important, however, than the lessons which we are taught through their saintly lives.

Mahaprabhu was influenced by the intense devotion of Kurma Vipra to accept his service. He was fortunate enough to be able to take the Lord to his house, where he washed his feet and gave the holy water to all his family members to drink. He gave the Lord to eat and ate his remnants as maha prasada.

+++In that village there was a Vedic Brahmin named Kurma. He respectfully invited Lord Chaitanya Mahaprabhu to his home. He washed the Lord's lotus feet and drank the water with his family members. With great affection and respect, he gave Mahaprabhu all kinds of food to eat. After that, all the members of the family shared his remnants. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.7.121-3)

The Brahmin glorified Mahaprabhu, pleasing him, but as the Lord left he was unable to bear the thought of being separated from him. He asked the Lord for permission to accompany him, but the Lord denied it him, telling him to stay at home and chant the names of Krishna and then to take the role of an acharya and preach the Holy Names to others.

+++The Lord said, <Never make such a suggestion again. You should rather remain at home and constantly chant the holy name of Krishna. Instruct whomever you see in the religion of Krishna. Become a spiritual master on my order and deliver everyone in this land. Do this and you will never again be entangled in the waves of materialistic life. Indeed, you will have my company again, here in this very place.> (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.7.127-9)

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur has elaborated on this instruction to Kurma Vipra in his Anubhasya as follows: <For those who are determined to abandon everything to take shelter of the Supreme Lord Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and serve him exclusively, the Lord here gives the instruction to remain in the home, i.e., to give up the pride of being a heroic performer of bhajana and to adopt a regular practice of chanting the Holy Name of Krishna in the home and, with the humility which is characterized by remaining in the householder life, instruct others in chanting the Holy Names. If

one takes up the duties of a spiritual master in this way, he will never become entangled in the <<waves of materialistic life>> in the form of the desire for self-aggrandizement. Many foolish people think that it is an impediment to spiritual practice to teach through writing books as Rupa Goswami, Sanatan Goswami, Jiva Goswami or Raghunath Das Goswami have done, or by taking on large numbers of disciples like Madhvacharya, Ramanujacharya or Narottama Das Thakur. Indeed, these less intelligent persons even claim that such activities are material entanglements. By adhering to these erroneous ideas, they become offenders to many unalloyed devotees who have nothing to do with the material world. This teaching of the Lord is intended for these people, who, if they analyze it carefully, will come to give up their false pride in a show of humility and, rather than demonstrating a vengeful attitude towards those who are devoid of a devotional attitude to the Lord, advance the cause of genuine bhajana.>

## **Friendship with Vasudeva Vipra**

In this same place, Mahaprabhu was also attracted by the heartfelt

devotion of the leper Vasudeva Vipra. He delivered him and embraced him, transforming him into a handsome man. Vasudeva said,

+++<Listen, O merciful one! The qualities you possess could not possibly manifest in an ordinary living being. The lowest of the low run away at the sight and smell of my body, yet you touched and embraced me! You are the supremely independent Lord. But I was well off in my humble state. By transforming me, you have put me at risk of becoming proud.> (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.7.144-6)

The Lord then gave him assurances that even though his body had been made handsome, he would not become entangled in the egoism which physical beauty usual brings along with it. He also told him to help others by teaching them to chant the holy names of Krishna.

The mercy of the Lord and his devotees upon seeing the distress of the conditioned souls is demonstrated by these words of the Lord and the above quotation from the writings of Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur.

As Mahaprabhu left the pilgrimage town of Kurmakṣetra, Kurma Vipra and Vasudeva embraced each other and sang his glories, their eyes filled with tears of sadness at his departure.

## **Sri Vasudeva Vipra**

+++Then Mahaprabhu set off for South India. In Kurmakṣetra, he liberated Vasudeva Vipra. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.1.103)

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Prabhupada has written the following comments on Kurmakṣetra or Kurmasthana. <On the BNR railroad line there is a station named Chikakola Road in the district of Ganjam. Eight miles east of this station is a place known as Kurmacala (Kurma's mountain) or Sri Kurmam. This is the most popular pilgrimage site for those who speak the Telugu language. When Ramanuja was flung there by Jagannath Deva in the 11th century of the Saka era, he thought that the Kurma deity was a Shiva-liṅga and so started a fast. Later, when he learned that it was in fact an image of the tortoise avatar of Vishnu, he arranged for it to be worshiped.>

Ganjam is a district of Orissa. Today, the Chikakola Road station is found in the state of Andhra Pradesh and has been renamed as Sri Kakulam Road. The BNR railway line is now India's South Eastern Railway.

## **The Lord's mercy to Vasudeva**

Vasudeva Vipra was one of Mahaprabhu's great devotees in the Deccan. It is very difficult to recognize a devotee. When a devotee is very poor and materially undistinguished, it is very hard for an ordinary mundane person to recognize him. Mahaprabhu revealed Vasudeva Vipra's glories to the world. While wandering through South India, Mahaprabhu blessed a Brahmin named Kurma Vipra. Vasudeva Vipra was a leper, who upon learning that Mahaprabhu was at

Kurma's house, went there in the hope of getting a glance of him. He learned from Kurma, however, that the Lord had already departed. Vasudeva was so disappointed at this news that he fell down on the ground and fainted.

The Lord is so affectionate to his devotees that even though he had already walked a good distance from there, he returned to grant Vasudeva the opportunity to see and embrace him. Mahaprabhu's touch immediately cured him of his leprosy and turned him into a healthy and handsome young man. The Lord is everywhere. If one is eager to have him, one can have him. The Lord can only be influenced by devotion. He takes no notice of any mundane qualification or virtue. He took no notice of Vasudeva's advanced case of leprosy, but embraced him out of his affection for him as a devotee.

Vasudeva was an incredible individual. The open sores of his body were home to maggots which fed off the puss and blood which oozed from them. If one of them should fall from the wound, Vasudeva would pick it up off the ground and put it back. Krishnadas Kaviraj Goswami has written as follows:

+++There was a Brahmin named Vasudeva who had an advanced case of leprosy, and maggots lived in his open sores. If any of these maggots should happen to fall from a wound, he would pick it up and replace it. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.7.137-8)

When Vasudeva Vipra was amazed to see the limitless mercy of the Supreme Lord and he responded with a verse spoken by Sudama Vipra from the Bhagavatam:

\*kvaham daridrah papiyan kva kṛṣṇaḥ sri-niketanah |

\*brahma-bandhur iti smaham bahubhyam parirambhitah || (BhP 10.89.16)

+++Just see the difference between a miserable sinner like myself and the abode of the Goddess of Fortune, Sri Krishna. Though I am an unqualified Brahmin, he has embraced me in his arms.

Such mercy could never be found in an ordinary human being. Ordinary people would stay far away from Vasudeva, being disgusted by the foul odor of his disease, but Mahaprabhu, the independent Lord, not only touched him, but embraced him.

## **A Vaishnava's body is never material**

It should be remembered that a Vaishnava's body is never material. It is transcendental and completely pure. Mahaprabhu's affection for his devotees was displayed to Hari Das Thakur, which has been described in the Chaitanya Charitamrita as follows:

+++Hari Das said, <You are the merciful supreme lord; no one can understand the depths of your heart. Vasudeva had such terrible leprosy that his gaping wounds were full of maggots, you are so merciful that you embraced him in spite of it. Your embrace turned him into a young man as beautiful as Cupid. No one can understand the waves of your mercy.> The Lord answered, <A devotee's body is never material. The devotee's transcendental body is made of divine and ecstatic spiritual substance.>

\*Prabhu kahe -- Vaishnava deha prakṛta kabhu naya |

\*aprakṛta deha bhaktera cid-ananda-maya || (Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.4.191)

+++A person who is without introspection or awareness of Krishna sees a Vaishnava's body only externally and thus is deprived of the vision of his spiritual form.

## **The Lord's instruction to Vasudeva**

When Vasudeva became a beautiful young man by the Lord's miraculous touch, he became afraid that he would become vain and that would be his downfall. Those who are proud and vain are deprived of the Lord's mercy and is not even qualified to chant the names of the Lord.

Mahaprabhu considered Vasudeva Vipra to be most qualified and instructed him

to act as an acharya:

+++The Lord said, <You will never become vain if you constantly chant Krishna's name. Deliver the fallen souls by instructing them about Krishna and Krishna will very quickly accept you.> (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.7.147-8)

## **Sri Raghupati Upadhyaya**

Sri Raghupati Upadhyaya was a Brahmin who originated from the region of Mithila. He was born in Tirhut, in the Sitamari subdivision of Darbhanga district in Bihar state. Tirhut or Tiruhita, was also the name for a kingdom which included the four modern districts of Darbhanga, Sitamarhi, Muzaffarpur and Champaran in northwestern Bihar. Paramananda Puri also came from Tirhut.

When Mahaprabhu heard Raghupati Upadhyaya's verses, he became overwhelmed with feelings of ecstatic love. Srila Rupa Goswami later included several of these verses in his Padyavali. Krishnadas Kaviraj Goswami has recounted the meeting of Raghupati with the Lord in his Chaitanya Charitamrita. Madhya-lila, 19. This meeting took place when Mahaprabhu was in Prayag and had gone to visit Vallabhacharya in Aṛail. [See vol. II, Chapter 3, on Rupa Goswami.]

+++At that time Raghupati Upadhyaya arrived there. He was from Tiruhita district, a learned scholar, a Vaishnava and a gentleman. He offered his respects to Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and the Lord blessed him, saying, <May you always remember Krishna.> (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.19.92-3)

When Mahaprabhu asked Raghupati to speak to him about Krishna, Raghupati recited a verse of his own composition:

\*srutim apare smṛtim itare

\*bharatam anye bhajantu bhava-bhitaḥ

\*aham iha nandaṁ vande

\*yasyalinde paraṁ brahma

+++Let those afraid of material existence worship the Vedas and Upaniṣads, the smṛtis and puraṇas, or the Mahabharata, as they wish. I, on the other hand, shall simply worship Maharaj Nanda, in whose courtyard plays the Supreme Truth. (Padyavali, 126)

Mahaprabhu was ecstatic upon hearing this beautiful verse and asked to hear more. Raghupati acquiesced by reciting another verse he had written:

\*kaṁ prati kathayitum iṣe

\*samprati ko va pratitum ayatu

\*go-pati-tanaya-kunje

\*gopa-vadhuṭi-viṭaṁ brahma

+++Whom dare I tell that the Supreme Truth, is lusting after the cowherds' brides in the bushes by the banks of the River Yamuna? And who will believe me when I say it? (Padyavali, 98)

As the Lord heard more and more of Raghupati's compositions, he went deeper and deeper into a trance of prema, demonstrating powerful ecstatic symptoms which made a great impression on the scholar, leading him to believe that Mahaprabhu was Krishna himself.

Mahaprabhu then asked Raghupati which of Krishna's many forms was the best. The scholar replied: <The Lord's blackish form is supreme.> Mahaprabhu then asked, <Which abode of the Lord is the best?> Raghupati answered, <Mathura is the best city.> In response to Mahaprabhu's question about Krishna's best age, he answered that it was his adolescence. And then to the question about the best



amongst the rasas, Raghupati stated that the primary rasa, or the erotic mood, was supreme. The complete verse is found in the Padyavali (82):

\*syamam eva param rupam

\*puri madhu-puri vara

\*vayah kaisorakam dhyeyam

\*adya eva paro rasah

Mahaprabhu embraced Raghupati in his ecstasy and then began to dance. Vallabha Bhatta and all the members of his householders were astounded by Raghupati Upadhyaya's great fortune.

## **Sanoriya Vipra**

Krishnadas Kaviraj Goswami tells about Mahaprabhu's meetings with the Sanoriya Brahmin in the seventeenth and eighteenth chapters of the Madhya-lila. Nothing is known about this Brahmin's family background--even his name is unknown. What we are concerned with here is the teachings which are to be found through his example.

## **Mahaprabhu meets the Sanoriya Brahmin**

When Mahaprabhu arrived in Mathura after passing through Kashi and Prayag,

he first came to the Visrama Ghat in Mathura where he bathed. Then he visited Krishna's birthplace and the deity of Adi Keshava, dancing before him in ecstatic love. Other visitors to the temple were amazed and charmed by the Lord's ecstatic dancing. At the same time, a certain Brahmin fell at the Lord's feet and then started to dance with him, joining the Lord in his trance of divine love. They embraced each other and then raised their arms and told everyone to sing the holy names of Hari and Krishna and a great tumult arose within the Adi Keshava temple. When the kirtan finished, Mahaprabhu took the Brahmin aside and asked him,

+++<You are a sincere and respectable elderly Brahmin. Tell me where you got this wealth of love for Krishna.> (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.17.155)

In reply, the Brahmin said, <While travelling throughout India, Madhavendra Puripada came to Mathura. He blessed me by setting foot in my humble abode. He initiated me by giving me the mantra and further blessed me by accepting food which I had cooked. He discovered the Gopal deity which is still being worshiped to this day by Govardhana.>

As soon as he learned of the elderly Brahmin's relationship to Madhavendra Puri, the Lord fell at his feet. The Brahmin became afraid at this action of the Lord and himself touched the Lord's feet. To teach that the spiritual master's godbrothers are worshipable by the disciple, the Lord said, <You are my guru, and I am practically your disciple. It is not fitting for a guru to pay obeisances to a disciple.> (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.17.170)

The Brahmin was astonished by the Lord's humility and said, <You are a sannyasi; it is not proper for a sannyasi to pay obeisances to a fallen person like myself.> But the Brahmin had also determined from the Lord's ecstatic symptoms that he too had some relationship to Madhavendra Puri. He asked the Lord's travelling companion, Balabhadra Bhattacharya the name of the Lord's guru. Upon learning that his guess had been correct, he was overjoyed.

The Brahmin then invited the Lord to his house and the Lord accepted, giving him the opportunity to personally render him various kinds of service.

## **The Lord accepts the Brahmin's invitation**

When it was time, the Brahmin asked Balabhadra Bhattacharya to cook the Lord's lunch, but Mahaprabhu himself intervened. He said, <Puri Gosani ate your cooking, so you should cook for me, too. This is what I have learned from his example.>

The Lord's host belonged to the Sanoriya community of Brahmins. According to Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur, members of the business community (vaisyas) in the west of India are divided into several castes: Agrawalas, Kanwars, Sanwars, etc. Of these, the Agrawalas are considered to be very pure, while the two other groups are considered fallen as a result of their own karma. Those Brahmins who perform the ritual activities for the gold and jewellery merchants (Kanwars and Sanwars) are known as Sanoriya Brahmins. Normally, because of these low caste associations, they are considered to be fallen as a caste. Sannyasis thus refuse to accept food in their homes.

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur adds to this the following analysis based on pure devotion. <The Sanoriya Brahmin was a pure devotee, and although even drinking water from his hand was prohibited due to his caste status, he nevertheless was fixed in the daiva-varṇasrama system and the Absolute Truth, both of which favor pure devotion. Those who judged devotees in terms of their mundane caste status (the adaiva-varṇasrama) or who cast aspersions on maha prasad were unhesitatingly identified as wicked fools by the Lord.>

Though sannyasis generally do not accept food from members of the Sanoriya caste, Madhavendra Puri did not hesitate to do so. Judging this Brahmin to have the qualities of a Vaishnava, Puripada gave him initiation and then ate in his house. The Sanoriya Brahmin himself was simply taking consideration of the Lord's reputation, which would be subject to criticism if he ignored caste rules. The Lord explained that since there may be some difference opinion between the various scriptures and the seers, the best course of action was to follow the example set by those saintly persons who establish the principles of religion. Finally, the Brahmin could understand the desire of the Lord and he cooked for him himself.

## **Saving the Lord's companions from danger**

As the Lord travelled from Puri to Mathura, his absorption in ecstatic love increased a hundredfold over that which he experienced in Puri. Upon arriving in Mathura, it increased a thousandfold, and when he went through the twelve forests of Vraja, it increased a hundred-thousandfold. Before leaving Nilachala, Ramananda Raya and Svarupa Damodar Goswami had arranged for two people to accompany him, Balabhadra Bhattacharya and another Brahmin servant.

While he was wandering through the twelve forests, a Rajaputa Krishna Das, was attracted by the Lord and joined him and his companions. When the Lord came to Akrura Ghaṭ he jumped into the Yamuna in a transport of ecstasy and remained submerged for a long period of time. Krishna Das became afraid that the Lord had drowned and started to cry out for help. Balabhadra Bhattacharya heard his shouts and immediately went into the water to pull the Lord out.

Balabhadra was anxious about the Lord's great distraction in divine ecstasy and so he discussed with Madhavendra Puri's disciple, the Sanoriya Brahmin, about what could be done to protect him. After some discussion, they decided that it was not wise to allow the Lord to stay any longer in Vrindavan. Rather, by telling him of the full-moon bath at the end of the month of Magh, known also as Makara-saṅkranti, they should incite him to go to Soro-kṣetra on the banks of the Ganges, whence they could go on to Prayag. Since the Sanoriya Brahmin was the godbrother of the Lord's guru, he was not able to refuse him when he made the suggestion to leave Vraja.

Though the Lord's body left the boundaries of Vrindavan, his consciousness remained fixed in love for Krishna, and his ecstatic trance remained unbroken. As he tired from walking, the Lord sat down underneath a tree. Nearby, a herd of cows was grazing which reminded him of Krishna's Vrindavan lila. All of a sudden, a cowherd began to play his flute causing Mahaprabhu to faint in an ecstasy of love. The Lord fell to the ground, his breathing stopped and foam accumulated around his mouth. At this very moment, the Muslim soldier Bijali Khan was passing by with a troop of ten

cavalrymen. On seeing the Lord's condition, Bijali Khan immediately became suspicious that foul play was afoot. He thought that the four men accompanying the Lord had poisoned him with datura in order to steal gold he had in his possession. The Pathan immediately made prisoners of the Lord's four companions with the intention of killing them. The two Bengali Brahmins began to tremble in fear; the two others, however, were fearless and able to think on their feet. The Sanoriya Brahmin tried to explain to the Pathan by saying: <I am a Brahmin from Mathura and I know hundreds of people in the Emperor's court. This sannyasi is my guru and he happens to have an illness which makes him faint from time to time. Go ahead and tie us up and wait for a few minutes. My guru will soon regain consciousness and you will be able to hear the truth from him.>

Bijali Khan listened to the Sanoriya Brahmin speak fearlessly and began to doubt his understanding of the situation. He replied, <I can recognize from your speech that you are from Mathura, but these two people are foreigners. They are also trembling, so they must be guilty of something.>

The Rajaputa Krishna Das sensed that the situation was becoming more dangerous and said brazenly, trying to frighten the Pathan, <I live in the neighboring village. I have two hundred soldiers with a hundred cannons. I only have to shout and they will come here and take your horses and equipment. I think that you must be the real highwaymen and not these two Bengalis.>

The Muslim cavalrymen were cast into doubt by the Rajaputa's fearless words. Meanwhile, the Lord came back to consciousness and in a transport of ecstasy, loudly cried out the names <Hari! Hari!> and began to dance. The Pathan soldiers were overcome by fear when they heard the Lord bellow and saw his ecstatic dancing. They immediately liberated their four prisoners so that the Lord did not see his devotees tied up. The Muslims were attracted by the Lord's physical beauty and spiritual mood and they asked him the question which had been troubling them: were these four people robbers who had drugged him in order to steal his possessions?

The Lord answered, <I am a sannyasi and I live by begging. I have no wealth. These four men are my followers. I sometimes suffer from epilepsy and fall unconscious as a result. These four companions mercifully stay with me when this happens to protect me and take care of me.>

## **Onward to Prayag**

Upon his arrival at Sorokṣetra, Mahaprabhu took his bath in the Ganges and then desired to set off for Prayag along the banks of the holy river. He turned to the Sanoriya Brahmin and the Rajaputa Krishna Das, <You have taken such trouble to come all this way from Mathura just to show us the way. I do not wish you to trouble yourselves any further. Please go back now.>

The two Vrajavasis answered, <We don't know when we will have the good fortune of your company again. There is a great likelihood of danger on the highways of this country which is dominated by non-Hindus. Balabhadra Bhattacharya does not know the local language. We think that these are good reasons for us to accompany you as far as Prayag.>

The Lord laughed slightly and agreed.

## **The Pathan Vaishnava, Sri Bijali Khan**

Sri Bijali Khan was a Pathan Muslim. Even so, after receiving Mahaprabhu's mercy, he became well-known as a Vaishnava. His father was a rich man. Krishnadas Kaviraj Goswami has described how he met the Lord and received his mercy in the eighteenth chapter of the Madhya-lila.

## **Mahaprabhu leaves Vraja**

That year, Mahaprabhu took the Jharikhaṇḍa route to Vrindavan after the Rathayatra festival. Ramananda Raya and Svarupa Damodar Goswami arranged for two people to accompany him, Balabhadra Bhattacharya and another Brahmin servant. As he travelled, his absorption in ecstatic love increased a hundredfold over that which he experienced in Puri. Upon arriving in Mathura, it increased a thousandfold, and when he went through the twelve forests of Vraja, it increased a hundred-thousandfold.

As he was wandering through the twelve forests, the Lord came to the place known as Akrura Ghaṭ on the Yamuna. The Lord jumped into the water and remained immersed for a long time. Krishna Das, a Rajaputa who had been attracted by the Lord and was accompanying him, became afraid that the Lord had drowned and started to cry out for help. Balabhadra Bhattacharya heard his shouts and quickly dove into the water to pull the him out.

Balabhadra was anxious about the Lord's great distraction due to his divine ecstasies and so he discussed with Madhavendra Puri's disciple, the Sanoriya Brahmin, about what could be done to protect him. After some discussion, they decided that the best thing to do was to propose to Mahaprabhu that he go to Soro-kṣetra on the banks of the Ganges for the full-moon bath at the end of the month of Magh, known also as Makara-saṅkranti. From there, they could take him on to Prayag. The Rajaputa Krishna Das and the Mathura Brahmin were well acquainted with the route along the Ganges and so they remained with the Lord and the two Brahmins as guides.

As they tired from walking, the Lord sat down underneath a tree. Nearby, a herd of cows was grazing which reminded the Lord of Krishna's Vrindavan lila. Suddenly, the cowherd began to play his flute causing Mahaprabhu to faint in ecstasy. He fell to the ground, his breathing stopped and foam accumulated around his mouth.

### **Bijali Khan ties up the Lord's companions**

At this very moment, the Muslim soldier, Bijali Khan was passing by with a troop of ten cavalymen. His immediate suspicion on seeing the Lord's condition

was that the four men accompanying him had poisoned him with datura in order to steal his money.

The Pathan immediately bound the Lord's four companions, intending to kill them, causing the two Bengali Brahmins to tremble in fear. The two others, however, were fearless and quickly thought of a way out of the situation. The Sanoriya Brahmin explained to the Pathan as follows: <I am a Brahmin from Mathura and I know hundreds of people in the Emperor's court. This sannyasi is my guru and he happens to be ill, which makes him faint from time to time. Tie us up and wait for a few minutes. He will regain consciousness and you will hear the truth from him.>

The Pathan listened and said, <I can understand what you two are saying. You are from Mathura, but these two Bengalis are trembling with guilt. They must have done something wrong.>

The Rajaputa Krishna Das was acutely aware of the danger of the situation and said, <I live in the neighboring village. I have two hundred Turkish mercenaries with a hundred cannons at my command. I only have to shout and they will come here and take your horses and equipment. I think that you must be highwaymen, not these two Bengalis. You are only interested in robbing pilgrims like us.>

The Muslim cavalymen were cast into doubt by these fearless words. Meanwhile, the Lord came back to consciousness and in a transport of ecstasy, shouted out the names <Hari! Hari!> and began to dance. The Pathan soldiers were overcome by fear when they heard the Lord bellow and saw his ecstatic dancing. They immediately liberated their four prisoners and the Lord never saw his devotees tied up. They were attracted by the Lord's physical beauty and by his spiritual mood and they asked him the question which had been troubling them: were these four people robbers who had drugged him in order to steal his possessions?

The Lord answered, <I am a sannyasi and I live by begging. I have no wealth. These four men are my followers. I sometimes suffer from epilepsy and fall unconscious as a result. These four companions mercifully stay with me when this happens to protect me and take care of me.>



## **The Lord discusses religion with a Sufi**

In the group of cavalrymen, one Muslim dressed all in black introduced himself as a Sufi practitioner. He was pleased by the Lord's appearance and wished to discuss scriptures with him. He established that the Supreme Truth was impersonal on the basis of the Islamic scriptures. The Lord, however, displayed his own knowledge of the Qur'an and demonstrated the invalidity of the Sufi's arguments, establishing the personal nature of the Supreme Truth and the Supreme Lord's transcendental qualities. Then the Lord went on to show that the philosophies of karma, jnana and yoga did not hold the answers to the supreme goal of life, which is nothing other than pure love of God.

All the Pathans were enchanted by the Lord's physical appearance and were even more attracted when they heard him speak on spiritual life and its goal. The Sufi Pathan began spontaneously to chant the names of Krishna. When Mahaprabhu heard the saintly Muslim chant the Lord's names, he was pleased, thinking that all the sins that he had accumulated over millions of births had all been destroyed and that he had been purified. The Lord told them all to chant, which they did. He initiated the Sufi Pathan in the holy name and gave him the name Rama Das. When the prince Bijali Khan saw the good fortune of his own servant, he fell down at the Lord's feet and repeated the name, <Krishna, Krishna.> The Lord also blessed him.

+++After bestowing his mercy upon them in this way, Mahaprabhu continued on his way. All the Muslim soldiers then became mendicants and were celebrated as the Pathan Vaishnavas. They toured all over the country, glorifying Mahaprabhu's activities. Bijali Khan became a greatly advanced devotee, and his fame was sung at every holy place of pilgrimage. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.18.210-2)

**Damodar Pandit**

\*saivyo yasid vraje caṇḍi sa Damodar-pañḍitaḥ |

\*kutascit karyato devi pravisat taṁ sarasvati ||

+++The terrible-tempered gopi named Saivya became Damodar Pandit in Gaura lila, though occasionally the goddess Saraswati also entered into him for some special purpose. (Gaura-gaṇoddesa-dipika 159)

Damodar Pandit is considered to be one of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's branches.

+++Damodar Pandit is another branch of the Chaitanya trunk. His love for the Lord was so intense that he even chastised him. This verbal punishment so satisfied the Lord that he sent him to Nadiya. I will tell this story later. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 1.10.31-2)

### **Damodar accompanies the Lord to Puri**

After the Lord took sannyas in Katwa, Nityananda Prabhu tricked him into coming to Advaita Prabhu's house in Shantipur. Many people came from Nabadwip to see him there, one of whom was Damodar Pandit. Mahaprabhu stayed ten days in Shantipur, after which he was asked by his mother to stay in Puri where she could always have news of him. Damodar Pandit was one of the devotees who accompanied the Lord on his trip to Jagannath Puri. The others were Nityananda Prabhu, Mukunda Datta and Jagadananda Pandit.

When Mahaprabhu arrived in Puri, he immediately went to the Jagannath temple where he fainted in ecstasy upon seeing Lord Jagannath. Vasudeva Sarvabhauma then took him to his own house to take care of him. At that time, Sarvabhauma was convinced of the mayavada philosophy, but by Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's mercy, he gave up his predilection for these doctrines and took up the path of devotion. He then had a vision of Mahaprabhu in a six-armed form which inspired him to compose a Sanskrit hymn to the Lord in a hundred verses. He wrote the first two verses glorifying Mahaprabhu on a palm leaf and gave it to Jagadananda Pandit and Damodar Pandit to show to the Lord. Mukunda Datta was there when they came from Sarvabhauma's house, and he took the

precaution of copying the two verses down on the wall in front of the Lord's residence before Jagadananda carried it in to show him. As soon as Mahaprabhu saw the verses, which glorified him as an incarnation of the Supreme Lord, he tore up the palm leaf, but because Mukunda had preserved the verses, the devotees were able to memorize them. [FN: The verses are as found in the chapters on Jagadananda Pandit and Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya.]

Mahaprabhu took sannyas during the fortnight of the waxing moon of Magh. He arrived in Puri in the month of Phalgun and delivered Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya in the following month of Chaitra. He departed alone on his pilgrimage to Southern India in the month of Vaishakh. Nityananda Prabhu and the other devotees he left behind in Puri suffered greatly in his separation. Nitai had tried to persuade the Lord to take one of them as a companion, but he refused. He then apparently criticized them, while in fact praising them. Of Damodar Pandit he said:

+++Even though I am a sannyasi and Damodar just a brahmachari, he is always telling me what to do, holding the rod of chastisement over me. He does not like me to act independently and so I do not know how to behave in front of him. By Krishna's mercy, he does not care for public opinion whereas I cannot be indifferent to what people think. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.7.25-7)

When Mahaprabhu returned from South India, getting as far as Alalanath, he sent his servant companion Krishna Das to inform Nityananda and the other devotees that he had arrived. Damodar Pandit joined Jagadananda, Nityananda and Mukunda joyfully rushed onto the main road where they met him.

+++As soon as he heard that the Lord had arrived, Nityananda got up and started off to meet him, as nothing could hold back his love. Jagadananda, Damodar Pandit and Mukunda all danced down the road, bursting with joy. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.9.339-40)

Once he had settled back in Puri, Mahaprabhu told Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya about the behavior of Krishna Das Vipra. While in the South, Krishna Das had been seduced away from his service to the Lord by a group of Bhattathari women. Mahaprabhu somehow managed to free him from their

clutches and brought him back to Puri. He then told him that he was free to go wherever he liked as he was no longer welcome to stay in his company. Krishna Das started to cry at this rejection, and out of sympathy for him, Nityananda, Damodar Pandit, Jagadananda and Mukunda discussed what to do with him. Finally, they recommended to the Lord that he be sent to Nabadwip with news of the Lord's return from his pilgrimage. The Lord approved the proposal and Kala Krishna Das set off, delighting everyone in Bengal with the good news. Later, when Damodar Pandit went back to Bengal himself, he met Kala Krishna Das.

### **Damodar's brother Saṅkara Pandit**

Mahaprabhu had a mixture of respect and affection for Damodar Pandit. Towards Damodar's younger brother Saṅkara Pandit, however, he had pure affection unseparated by any distance. However, for his own good, he put Saṅkara in the care of his older brother because he knew that Damodar would keep him under strict discipline.

++Seeing Saṅkara, the Lord turned to Damodar Pandit and said, <My love for you is mixed with reverence, whereas I love Saṅkara with all my heart. For this reason I am putting him under your care.> (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.11.146-7)

Damodar answered, <Saṅkara is younger than me, but from this day on, by your grace, I will treat him as my elder.>

During Mahaprabhu's later pastimes, Saṅkara stayed in his direct association, sleeping in the same room. The Lord would even sleep sometimes with his feet resting on Saṅkara's body, as a result of which he received the nickname prabhu-padopadhana -- <Mahaprabhu's foot pillow>.

### **Damodar's tendency to criticize the Lord's behavior**

One day, the Lord himself began serving prasada to his devotees. Since he was engaged in serving, he was not eating. The other devotees raised their hands and sat silently, refusing to eat until the Lord did so. Finally, Svarupa Damodar asked the Lord to sit down with Nityananda and to take prasada. Svarupa Damodar, Jagadananda, Damodar Pandit and others then served. Only then did the devotees feel capable of eating.

When the Lord returned from the South, Maharaj Prataparudra asked several times for permission to meet with him. When Mahaprabhu refused, he became so distraught that he threatened to give up his kingdom and become a beggar. The Lord's devotees were all impressed by the King's show of devotion and wished to intervene on his behalf. Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya suggested that instead of directly asking the Lord to meet with the King, they should simply praise his faith and devotion in the hope that this would change the Lord's attitude. Following this policy, Nityananda told the Lord of the King's intention to become a yogi beggar if he could not have a personal audience with him. Mahaprabhu was somewhat mollified upon hearing this, but nevertheless maintained a hardline attitude. He named Damodar Pandit as a reason for such strict behavior:

+++<It is your wish to take me to Cuttack to meet with the King. Not only will my spiritual practice be affected by such an action, but people will criticize me. If they do, that does not bother me so much, but I am afraid that Damodar Pandit will chastize me. I will not go to meet the King on your order alone. I will only go if Damodar tells me to.> (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.12.23-5)

Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur comments on these verses in the following way:  
<Mahaprabhu said, <<I will not grant an audience to the King on your order alone. Only if Damodar Pandit commands me shall I consider it.>> These words had a particular significance: though the Lord appreciated Damodar's devotion, his criticisms of the Lord's behavior were often unnecessary. The Lord was thus hinting that Damodar should stop this tendency to unnecessary criticism.>  
(Amṛta-pravaha-bhāṣya, 2.12.25)

When Damodar Pandit heard the Lord's words, he muttered in response, <Mahaprabhu is the supremely independent Lord. He knows what should or should not be done. No insignificant jiva is going to dictate to him what to do.

The Lord is subject to devotion and the King is devoted to him, so he will surely meet with him some day. He may be supremely independent, but he is controlled by his devotee's love.>

## **Other pastimes in Puri**

Damodar Pandit was also the Lord's companion during the Rathayatra festival. He was one of the chorus singers in one of the seven kirtan groups in which Svarupa Damodar was the lead singer. Advaita Acharya danced in the same group.

When Mahaprabhu set off for Vrindavan through Gauḍadesa with many of his associates, including Damodar Pandit. On this occasion, the Lord did not make it all the way to Vraja, as he changed his mind on Sanatan Goswami's advice.

The following year, Mahaprabhu travelled through northern India, going as far as Vrindavan. He then returned to Puri with Balabhadra on the path through Jhārikhaṇḍa. When they received the news of the Lord's arrival in Aṭharo Nala, all the Lord's devotees rushed there to welcome him back. The Lord's affectionately embraced each one of them.

## **Mahaprabhu and the widow's son**

There was an Orissan widow living in Puri while Mahaprabhu was there. She had a handsome young son who would come to visit the Lord daily. He would pay his obeisances to the Lord and then engage him in a lengthy, affectionate conversation. The boy came to love the Lord as he loved himself and was not able to go through a day without seeing him. The Lord also treated the boy with great warmth. Damodar Pandit, however, could not tolerate seeing the affectionate relationship between the Lord and this boy. Though he repeatedly

forbade him, the boy continued to come to see the Lord. A child will naturally go where he receives affection and the Lord was indeed very affectionate to him.

One day, Damodar Pandit finally exploded and said sarcastically to the Lord,

+++<Everyone says you are very learned because of the instructions you so generously give to others. I shall see what kind of master you really are. Now people will glorify you for being a great master and you will truly be famous as a master throughout Puri.> (Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.3.11-12)

The Lord did not understand at first what Damodar was getting at and made him explain himself. The Pandit made himself more explicit, <Lord, you do as you like. No one has the authority to dictate to you. Even so, this is a world full of gossips whose speech no one can stifle. You are learned, so why don't you yourself see the implications of your acts? Why do you behave so affectionately towards a widow's child? She may be an austere and chaste Brahmin woman, but she has the fault of being young and beautiful. You too are a young and handsome man. Such a close relationship with her son gives the world occasion to whisper. Do you think that this is intelligent behavior?>

With that, Damodar fell silent. Mahaprabhu was satisfied with his sentiments and said,

+++<This is what I call a wave of pure love! No one is as intimate an associate as Damodar.> (Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.3.17)

## **Mahaprabhu sends Damodar to Nadiya**

One day Mahaprabhu called Damodar Pandit and asked him to go to Sachi Mata in Nabadwip and to help supervise her material affairs.

+++<No one is more suited than you to act in her protection, for you have warned even me. Amongst my associates, there is no one more impartial than you. Religious principles can only be defended by someone who is free from

bias or prejudice.> (Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.3.22-3)

After telling Damodar to return to Nabadwip, he then consoled him by telling him to return to Puri from time to time. He also told him to pay repeated obeisances to his mother and gave him a confidential message to deliver to her:

<Tell her that I am happy, as this will give her happiness. Tell her that I have sent you to tell you of my personal activities. After you have warmed her heart in this way, remind her of one most secret event: I come to her home repeatedly to eat all the sweetmeats and vegetables she offers. She experiences my coming and eating of the offerings to be real, but because of external separation, she thinks that it is nothing but a dream. During the last Magh-saṅkranti festival, she cooked a variety of vegetables, condensed milk, cakes and sweet rice for me. She then offered the food to Lord Krishna, and while in meditation, I suddenly appeared and her eyes filled with tears. When she saw me come there in great haste and eat everything, she felt great happiness. But a moment later, after she had wiped her eyes, she saw that the plate she had offered me was empty and thought, <I dreamt that Nimai was eating everything.>

+++<In the condition of external separation, she again became bewildered, thinking that she had not offered any food to Lord Vishnu. She went back to the kitchen to look at the cooking pots and found that every one of them was still filled with food. So she cleansed the altar and made the offering once again. This is how I come again and again to eat everything she offers me, for I am attracted by her pure love. I reside in Nilachala only because she told me to. Even still, she repeatedly pulls me back to her out of her great love for me.> (Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.3.19-39)

Mahaprabhu then gave some Jagannath prasad to Damodar Pandit and told him to give it to Sachi Mata and the other Nabadwip devotees. Damodar set off and carried out the Lord's instructions to the letter. With the Pandit there in Nabadwip, the devotees became very careful about their behavior. No one dared to act in an independent manner. If anyone of Mahaprabhu's followers made even the slightest transgression in etiquette, Damodar Pandit would establish the standards of behavior by verbally punishing the offender.

+++The ignorance of atheism will flee from anyone who hears this history of Damodar Pandit's chastisement of the Lord which has just been described. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.3.46)



Damodar Pandit is thus one of the great devotees through whose preaching, the glories of the Holy Name have spread throughout the universe. Mahaprabhu glorified these great souls when he said,

+++<I have come to possess devotion to Krishna through the grace of all these great devotees who have preached love for the Holy Name throughout the world.> (Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.7.50)

In the Bhakti-ratnakara, Narahari Chakravarti says that Narottama Das Thakur met Damodar Pandit in Nabadwip. Narottama paid his obeisances to his feet in excitement at meeting a direct associate of the Lord. (Bhakti-ratnakara 8.93)

## **Sri Jagadananda Pandit**

\*kenavantara-bhedena bhedaṁ kurvanti satvataḥ |

\*satyabhama-prakaso'pi jagadananda-panḍitaḥ ||

+++Devotees make no inner distinction between Satyabhama and Jagadananda Pandit. (Gaura-gaṇoddesa-dipika 51)

+++Jagadananda Pandit is the very life of the Lord. He is known everywhere as being a manifestation of Satyabhama. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 1.10.29)

+++All glories to Gauranga, the life of Jagadananda and Srigarbha!

+++All glories to the wealth of Vakresvara Pandit! (Chaitanya Bhagavat 2.7.3)

The date and place of Jagadananda Pandit's birth are unknown. Devotees who are seeking devotion as the goal of their lives do not consider detailed information about a spiritual master's material identity to be essential. From Chaitanya Bhagavat we learn that Jagadananda Pandit was present at Srivasa Angan and at Chandrasekhara's house after Mahaprabhu returned from Gaya and participated in the beginnings of the sankirtan movement.

+++All the Vaishnavas felt great enthusiasm when they heard that Mahaprabhu had begun his sankirtan movement. Every night, these kirtans took place in the house of Srivasa Pandit, and on certain occasions, in the house of Chandrasekhara Acharya. Nityananda, Gadadhara, Advaita, Srivasa, Vidyanidhi, Murari, Hiranya, Hari Das, Ganga Das, Vanamali, Vijaya, Nandana, Jagadananda, Buddhimanta Khan, Narayan. These were some of the personalities who stayed with the Lord as he danced. Other than such intimate associates, no one was allowed entrance into the sankirtan. (Chaitanya Bhagavat 2.8.110-113, 117)

Thus from Vrindavan Das's account, we know that Jagadananda Pandit is an eternal associate of the Lord and participated with him in his Nabadwip sankirtan pastimes. From this we can surmise that he was born somewhere in Bengal.

### **Jagadananda accompanies the Lord to Puri**

According to the Chaitanya Bhagavat, Jagadananda Pandit was in the group of devotees who accompanied Mahaprabhu from Shantipur to Puri after he took sannyas, the others being Nityananda Prabhu, Gadadhara Pandit, Mukunda Datta, Govinda and Brahmananda. The Chaitanya Charitamrita version has the Lord being accompanied by Nityananda, Jagadananda, Damodar and Mukunda.

On their way to Puri, as they travelled through Atisara, Chatrabhog, Northern Orissa, Suvarṇarekha, Jalesvara, Remuna, Yajpur, Vaitaraṇi, Kaṭak (Cuttack), Sakṣigopala, Bhuvanesvara, Kamalapura, Aṭharanala, etc., Mahaprabhu gave his companions many lessons in how to depend on the Lord and other matters. In one place named Gangaghāṭa, just across the frontier into Orissa, Mahaprabhu himself told his companions to wait in a temple while he went to the village to beg. He came back with rice and vegetables in his cloth which he gave to Jagadananda to cook. When he had finished preparing the meal, Mahaprabhu and his other companions ate his cooking with great relish.

According to the Chaitanya Bhagavat, Mahaprabhu gave his daṇḍa (staff) to Jagadananda to carry as they walked. One day, Jagadananda gave the daṇḍa to

Nityananda Prabhu to hold as he went to collect foodstuffs. Nityananda Prabhu is non-different from Balaram and he took this opportunity to break Mahaprabhu's staff into three pieces, so teaching his followers to take the tridaṇḍa, a staff of three branches. According to the Chaitanya Bhagavat, Jagadananda took the broken staff to Mahaprabhu, and he became extremely unhappy to have lost his only possession. Mahaprabhu then told his companions that he wished to travel alone, giving them the choice of whether he would walk in front or behind them. The devotees answered that they would walk behind him, not in front.

+++Leaving Nityananda Svarupa in one place, Jagadananda went to look for food. Jagadananda carried the Lord's daṇḍa, and he left it with Nityananda when he went. He said, <Take care of the Lord's daṇḍa. I will be right back after begging foodstuffs.> (Chaitanya Bhagavat 3.2.202-4)

While walking in front of the other devotees, from Aṭharanala Mahaprabhu saw a vision of Krishna playing his flute on the pinnacle of the Jagannath Puri temple. He ran toward the temple and entered to behold the form of Jagannath, whereupon he fell into a swoon. Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya noticed him and took him to his own house where he saw to his care. Nityananda, Jagadananda, Mukunda and Damodar arrived at the Jagannath temple not long afterwards. There they heard that the Lord was at Sarvabhauma's residence and they immediately went there. This was Jagadananda's first meeting with Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya.

## **A permanent associate of the Lord at Puri**

The first time that Mahaprabhu wished to go to Vrindavan, he came to Gauḍa-maṇḍala from Puri. He stayed in Vidyanagara for five days; from there he went on to Kuliya, and then through Maldah district to the village of Ramakeli where he met with Rupa and Sanatan. Jagadananda was amongst the associates of Mahaprabhu present on that occasion along with Nityananda, Hari Das, Srivasa, Gadadhara, Mukunda, Murari and Vakresvara. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.1.219)

Jagadananda Pandit was a permanent associate of the Lord at Puri:

+++Gadadhara Pandit, Vakresvara, Damodar, Saṅkara, Hari Das, Jagadananda, Bhavananda, Govinda, Kashisvara, Paramananda Puri and Svarupa Damodar, all came and made their residence in Puri. They, along with Ramananda Raya and other long-time residents of Sri Kṣetra, were Mahaprabhu's permanent companions. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.1.252-4)

Jagadananda Pandit's mood was primarily that of madhura-rasa, which was very pleasing to Mahaprabhu and won his heart. In the Chaitanya Charitamrita, this is described as follows:

+++Paramananda Puri had parental affection for Mahaprabhu; Ramananda Raya had love for him in pure friendship; Govinda Das's love for him was as a servant. Gadadhara, Jagadananda and Svarupa Damodar worshiped in the ecstasy of the chief rasa. Mahaprabhu heart was won by these four different loving attitudes. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.2.78)

By Mahaprabhu's mercy, Saravabhauma Bhattacharya gave up his predilection for the impersonal philosophy of Mayavada and took up the path of devotion. He then had a vision of Mahaprabhu in a six-armed form which inspired him to compose a Sanskrit hymn to the Lord in a hundred verses. He wrote the first two verses glorifying Mahaprabhu on a palm leaf and gave it to Jagadananda to bring to the Lord. Mukunda Datta was there when Jagadananda came from Saravabhauma's house, carrying Jagannath prasad and the palm leaf. He took the precaution of copying the two verses down on the wall in front of the Lord's residence before Jagadananda carried it in to show him. As soon as Mahaprabhu saw the verses, which glorified him as an incarnation of the Supreme Lord, he tore up the palm leaf. Because Mukunda had preserved the verses on the wall, however, the devotees were able to obtain great joy from reading them. The verses are as follows:

\*vairagya-vidya-nija-bhakti-yoga-

\*sikṣartham ekaḥ puruṣaḥ puraṇaḥ |

\*sri-kṛṣṇa-caitanya-sarira-dhari

\*kṛpambudhir yas tam ahaṁ prapadye ||

\*kalan naṣṭaṁ bhakti-yogaṁ nijam yaḥ

\*praduṣkartuṁ kṛṣṇa-caitanya-nama |

\*avirbhūtas tasya padaravinde

\*gaḍhaṁ gaḍhaṁ liyate citta-bhṛṅgaḥ ||

+++Let me take shelter of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the ocean of transcendental mercy, Sri Krishna, who has descended in the form of Lord Chaitanya Mahāprabhu to teach us detachment, real knowledge and his own devotional service.

+++The Supreme Personality of Godhead, who has taken the name of Sri Krishna Chaitanya, has appeared to reveal the ancient system of devotional service to himself which had almost been lost due to the influence of time. I pray that the honeybee of my mind will drink deeply of the honey of his lotus feet. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.6.253-4; Chaitanya-candrodaya-nāṭaka 6.74)

Mahāprabhu took sannyas during the fortnight of the waxing moon of the month of Magh (January-February). He arrived in Nilachala in the month of Phalguṇa (February-March). In the month of Chaitra (March-April), he converted Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya to Vaiṣṇavism. In the month of Vaisakh (April-May), he left for his pilgrimage to the south of India. When Mahāprabhu said that he wanted to go on this pilgrimage alone, Nityananda Prabhu told him that he should not travel by himself and suggested that he would accompany him. At this time, Mahāprabhu showed his great affection for his companions (Nityananda Prabhu, Damodar Brahmachari, Jagadananda Pandit, etc.) by remonstrating with them and refusing their company on this pilgrimage. Of Jagadananda, he said,

+++<Jagadananda wants me to enjoy sense gratification. I try to do whatever he

tells me because I am afraid of him. Whenever I act contrary to his wishes, he gets angry and stops talking to me for three days at a time.> (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.7.21-2)

While Mahaprabhu was travelling in the South, the devotees waited for him in great distress caused by his absence. The deeper one's love, the more one feels the pain of separation. The sign of real love is in the intensity of the joy one feels at being united with someone from whom one has been separated. After travelling for several months, the lord arrived in Alalanath, near Puri, and sent his servant Krishna Das to tell Nityananda and the other devotees that he had returned. The enthusiasm that they all felt for seeing him again knew no bounds and they all rushed to Alalanath. Krishnadas Kaviraj Goswami describes their reaction to the news of his arrival in his Chaitanya Charitamrita as follows:

+++As soon as Nityananda heard of Mahaprabhu's arrival, he immediately got up to go to see him. Indeed, his love for the lord made him very impatient. Jagadananda, Damodar Pandit and Mukunda, danced as they went to greet the Lord, their bodies unable to hold back their ecstasy. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.9.339-40)

Nityananda Prabhu, Jagadananda and the others advised Mahaprabhu to send Krishna Das to Gauḍa to tell Sachi that the lord had returned from his pilgrimage to South India. Mahaprabhu approved of the idea out of a desire to give pleasure to his devotees. Gradually, in the company of Jagadananda, Mahaprabhu met with all the devotees who had come to live in Puri, including Svarupa Damodar, Raya Ramananda, Hari Das Thakur, etc. One of Jagadananda's most enjoyable services to the Lord and his devotees was to satisfy them with the foodstuffs that he had himself cooked.

The Bengal devotees came annually during the Caturmasya period to be with the Lord in Nilachala. They did this three years in a row before Mahaprabhu announced his determination to go to Vrindavan. On this occasion, Jagadananda was amongst his companions when he travelled through Orissa and Gauḍa. They went to Panihati, Kumarahatta, Kuliya village, Ramakeli, etc., before finally turning back from the village of Kanair Natshala to return to Puri, abandoning the pilgrimage to Vrindavan because of the large crowd of companions which had gathered around him. The Lord vowed that the next time he would travel to Vrindavan alone. When he did go again, he took the path through the Jharikhaṇḍa jungles, accompanied only by a servant named

Balabhadra Bhattacharya. When he returned by the same path, he was once again reunited with his loving devotees including Jagadananda, who had once again been suffering greatly in his absence. This reunion was so joyful that it is beyond description.

## **Sanatan comes to Puri**

Once Sanatan Goswami took the Jhaṛikhaṇḍa route to Nilachala from Vraja. On the way, he developed blistering sores all over his body due to drinking bad water and fasting. Sanatan became extremely troubled by the disease because his physical impurity would make him an obstacle to the servants of Jagannath. In view of this potential offense, he decided that he would throw himself under the wheels of Jagannath's chariot during the Rathayatra festival. Mahaprabhu, the indweller of all beings, knew that he had made this decision and said to him, <You cannot attain Krishna through suicide. You can only attain him through bhajana. You have no right to destroy the body which has been given to you so that you can render service.>

These instructions had an effect on Sanatan and he changed his mind. The Lord himself does not concern himself with the purity or impurity of a devotee's external body; he is attracted by the inner purity of his desire for service. Therefore Mahaprabhu did not hesitate to embrace Sanatan, again and again. When he did so, the pus leaking from Sanatan's sores touched the Lord's body which embarrassed and shamed him. Sanatan turned to Jagadananda Pandit for advice and Jagadananda told him that he should leave for Vrindavan immediately after the Rathayatra. Sanatan thought that this was the best solution and went to Mahaprabhu to ask him permission to depart. When Mahaprabhu heard this, he became angry and chastised Jagadananda, saying:

+++<Jagadananda is just a newcomer, a boy. Yet, he has become so proud that he thinks that he can give even you advice. You are his guru in every respect, both in material and spiritual terms. Yet he gives you advice? Doesn't he know his own worth? You are my teacher; you are an authority. And yet, like an impudent child, he is giving instruction to even someone as qualified as you.>  
(Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.4.158-60)

The devotee and the Lord occasionally chastise their intimates. If the devotee is chastised by the Lord, he should consider it a great good fortune. Sanatan reacted to Mahaprabhu's criticism of Jagadananda as a sign of his great fortune and his own misfortune.

+++You accept Jagadananda into your inner circle, while you venerate me. It is as though you were giving him ambrosia to drink and me the bitter juice of neem and tobacco leaves. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.4.163)

Even though Mahaprabhu had long been won over by Jagadananda's devotion to him, he made a point of teaching all of his followers Vaishnava etiquette and the importance of offering the proper respect to senior Vaishnavas such as Sanatan Goswami Prabhu through him. He said to him,

+++<Jagadananda is not more dear to me than you, but I cannot tolerate transgressions of etiquette.> (Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.4.166)

When Mahaprabhu was telling Vallabha Bhatta about the greatness of devotees, he said that through the association of preachers of the Holy Name like Jagadananda Pandit, one could attain devotion to Krishna.

+++Acharyaratna, Acharyanidhi, Gadadhara Pandit, Jagadananda, Damodar, Saṅkara, Vakresvara, Kashisvara, Mukunda, Vasudeva, Murari and so many other great devotees have appeared in Gauḍadesa. They have preached the glories of the Holy Name throughout the world. It is through their association that I have a little devotion to Krishna. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.7.48-50)

## **Jagadananda as Satyabhama**

Jagadananda is the incarnation of Satyabhama, thus because of his refractory nature, he and Mahaprabhu would often quarrel.

+++Jagadananda Pandit had a deep and pure love for the Lord, like that of Satyabhama for Krishna. He was moody, being possessed of the vama nature. He would repeatedly provoke loving arguments with the Lord and there always



seemed to be some misunderstanding between them. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.7.142-3)

In the Chaitanya Charitamrita, at the beginning of the eighth chapter of the Antya-lila, Krishnadas Kaviraj Goswami contrasts the sincere loving attitude of Jagadananda Pandit with the hypocrisy of Ramachandra Puri. Even though Ramachandra Puri was officially a disciple of Madhavendra Puri, he had no proclivity for service. Because of his lack of sincerity and his false piety, he was ultimately deprived of his guru's mercy.

Jagadananda was present at Hari Das Thakur's funeral celebration, serving prasad to the senior associates of the Lord. By his behavior, he showed that giving prasad to the devotees was an important element of devotional service.

During the Caturmasya all the devotees would come to meet the Lord in Nilachala and would return at the end of the four month period. In the same year that Mahaprabhu told Nityananda not to come to Puri, he also sent Jagadananda to Nabadwip with a message for his mother. Jagadananda recounted that which Mahaprabhu had told him about the exact times when Sachi Mata thought that she had dreamt or hallucinated his coming and eating her food offerings. When she heard this from Jagadananda, she believed that these secret visits were not hallucinations, but had in fact been real--he really had come. When the other devotees met Mahaprabhu's intimate associate, Jagadananda, they all were submerged in an ocean of happiness.

Jagadananda then went to Shivananda Sena's house where he collected a fragrant sandalwood oil for rubbing on Mahaprabhu's head. He filled an earthen jug with the oil and brought it back with him to Puri where he gave it to Govinda, the Lord's servant. Govinda then told Mahaprabhu, <Jagadananda Pandit has brought aromatic sandalwood oil back from Gauḍadesa with him. If you rub it on your head, it will relieve the symptoms of disturbed bile and wind.> In order to set a proper example, Mahaprabhu answered, <Sannyasis are forbidden the use of body oils. It is even more reprehensible to use aromatic oils. Since he has gone to the trouble of bringing the oil all the way here, you can give it to the Jagannath temple. They can use the oil to light lamps for the Deity. That will make all his troubles worthwhile.>

Govinda told Jagadananda of Mahaprabhu's decision. Jagadananda began to sulk and stopped talking. After ten days, Govinda again told Mahaprabhu that

Jagadananda still wished him to use the oil. Mahaprabhu became angry and in order to teach the world, said,

+++<Why don't we hire a masseur to give me massage. Are these the pleasures for which I have taken the renounced order? You will all be very amused at seeing my downfall. As I walk along the road, people will get a whiff of my perfumes and say, there goes a womanizing monk. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.12.112-4)

Govinda was speechless at Mahaprabhu's tirade. The next morning, Jagadananda Pandit came to Mahaprabhu who again said to him, <A sannyasi shouldn't use fragrant oils. The best thing to do is to offer it to Jagannath for his service.> Jagadananda became angry and proudly said, <Who told you I brought this oil all the way from Gauḍa? It's a lie.> He then threw down the earthen jug in the courtyard and broke it. Then he went to his own room, locked the door and lay down.

After he had fasted for three days, Mahaprabhu finally went himself to assuage him, knocking on his door and saying gently, <Jagadananda! Open the door. I am going now to bathe and then to the temple for darshan of Jagannath. When I come back I will take whatever food you have prepared for me. So start cooking.> Out of his love for the Lord, Jagadananda immediately got up, bathed and started preparing the Lord's lunch. After performing his noonday rituals, the Lord returned, let Jagadananda wash his feet and then sat down to eat. Jagadananda set a banana leaf before him and then covered it with fine rice soaked in clarified butter, numerous vegetable preparations and then cakes and sweet rice. Mahaprabhu told Jagadananda to set another banana leaf and fill it with food as he had done so that he could eat beside him. He lifted his hands in the air and refused to eat a bite until Jagadananda sat down and ate with him. Finally, Jagadananda's pride melted and he agreed to take the Lord's prasada once he had finished. As he ate, Mahaprabhu repeatedly praised the food that Jagadananda had cooked in his loving anger.

+++<This is the kind of nectar that you offer to Krishna. Who can estimate the extent of your good fortune?> (Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.12.133)

Jagadananda kept serving more and more vegetables to the Lord, who out of fear refused nothing, eating everything that he was given. He was afraid that if he refused even a single preparation Jagadananda would again start fasting, so on

that day, he ate ten times as much as he did normally. After the meal, Jagadananda gave him some aromatic spices, sandalwood and a garland. Mahaprabhu then insisted that he sit down and take his meal in front of him. Jagadananda pleaded with Mahaprabhu to go and rest, as he was well aware of the demands of etiquette. Ramai and Raghunath Bhatta had also helped with the cooking, so he wanted them to eat also before sitting down himself, but he assured the Lord that he would. Mahaprabhu was still not convinced and so he told Govinda to remain there and report to him whether or not Jagadananda had eaten. But Jagadananda immediately told Govinda to go and massage the Lord's feet. After he had given Ramai, Nandai, Govinda and Raghunath Bhatta to eat, Jagadananda took the remnants of Mahaprabhu's plate. When Mahaprabhu heard that Jagadananda had finally eaten, he was able to rest peacefully.

+++Jagadananda's love for the Lord was just like the descriptions of Satyabhama's love for Krishna in the Bhagavat. Who can describe the extent of Jagadananda's good fortune? His love is the standard by which that of others is to be compared. Anyone who hears about the loving exchanges (prema-vivarta) between Jagadananda Pandit and Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu will know the characteristics of prema and will attain the wealth of pure love. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.12.152-4)

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur writes that the words prema-vivarta in this verse can mean both the kind of confused transformations of love that Jagadananda underwent with the Lord, or the book of that name which he wrote.

### **The Lord sleeps on plantain bark**

Due to his intense feelings of separation from Krishna, Mahaprabhu started to increase his vows of renunciation. He decided to sleep on a bed of dried plantain bark, which caused him pain by rubbing against his bones. The devotees were greatly distressed to see the Lord's suffering. Jagadananda decided to take steps to alleviate the Lord's pain by getting some cloth and dyeing it saffron, and then

filling it with cotton from the silk cotton tree. In this way he made both a mattress and a pillow for the Lord's comfort. Jagadananda then asked Govinda Das to give the mattress and pillow to the Lord and Svarupa Damodar to convince him to use them. When it was time for the Lord to go to bed, he saw the cotton pillow and became angry. However, when he heard that Jagadananda Pandit had given it, he hesitated. So he made a pretense of anger, <A mattress and pillow? Why don't you just go and get me a bed? A sannyasi is supposed to sleep on the ground. Jagadananda wants me to become a sense enjoyer. This is shameful.> Jagadananda was saddened when he heard from Svarupa Damodar that Mahaprabhu had refused the bedding. However, Svarupa Damodar cleverly made some bedding out of dried banana leaves which the Lord accepted. This satisfied all the devotees with the exception of Jagadananda.

Though he said nothing about it, Jagadananda was angry and asked Mahaprabhu for permission to go to Vrindavan. The Lord was able to understand the real reason for his dissatisfaction and said to him in a consoling voice, <You are angry and blame me for it. And so you want to go to Mathura and become a beggar?> The petulant Jagadananda hid his true feelings and simply said, <I have wanted to go to Vrindavan for a long time. Previously you wouldn't give me permission, so I could not go.>

Mahaprabhu out of his affection for Jagadananda would not give him permission even though he asked him repeatedly. Finally, Jagadananda asked Svarupa Damodar to intercede on his behalf and get the Lord's permission to go. Svarupa Damodar went to Mahaprabhu and said, <Jagadananda's desire to see Vrindavan is very strong. I think it would be a good idea if you sent him to Vrindavan just as you previously sent him to Nabadwip with a message for Sachi Mata.> Thus, Mahaprabhu finally allowed himself to be persuaded and accorded permission to Jagadananda to go to Vraja. Out of his affection for him, however, he gave him elaborate instructions for his voyage. <The road up to Varanasi is free from any problems. After Varanasi, however, the road is full of robbers, so be careful. You should take some soldiers with you for your protection. If the highwaymen see a single Bengali on the road, they will be sure to attack and loot him. When you get to Mathura, first go and see Sanatan. Offer your respects to the Caube Brahmins of Mathura, but don't associate with them. You will not be able to understand their behavior, so respect them at a distance. Do the Vraja-parikrama with Sanatan, do not leave his side for even a moment. Don't climb Govardhana to see Gopal. Don't stay in Vraja for a long time. Hurry back.>

+++<Come back quickly! Do not stay there for a long time. Don't climb Govardhana to take darshan of Gopal.> (Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.13.39)

## **Jagadananda chastises Sanatan**

Jagadananda paid his obeisance to the Lord and left on foot for Varanasi where he met with Tapana Mishra and Chandrasekhara. From there he went on to Mathura where he met Sanatan Goswami. Sanatan took him around the twelve forests of Vraja and then they stayed together for some time in Gokula Mahavana. Sanatan Goswami used to live on madhukari, begging for pieces of bread from the local people, but since Jagadananda was not habituated to a wheat-based diet, he went to a local temple and cooked rice. One day, Jagadananda invited Sanatan Goswami to eat. A certain sannyasi named Mukunda Saraswati had given a saffron cloth to Sanatan which he would wear wrapped around his head. When Jagadananda saw this, he thought that the cloth must have been given to Sanatan by the Lord and was overwhelmed with love. When he learned, however, that the cloth had been given by someone else, he became so angry that he was ready to hit Sanatan with the rice pot. He criticized Sanatan:

+++<You are Mahaprabhu's most important associate. No one is dearer to him than you. How could anyone tolerate you wearing another sannyasi's cloth around your head?> Sanatan answered, <Well said! It is clear, Pandit Mahasaya, that you are unequalled in your love for the Lord. Only from you could I have learned this lesson, for you alone have such solid faith in the Lord.. My purpose in binding the cloth around my head has been realized, for as soon as you saw it, I was able to witness the manifestations of your love for the Lord. A Vaishnava should not wear a saffron-colored cloth. I will give it to someone else, for I have no further need for it.> (Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.13.56-61)

Jagadananda offered the food he had cooked to Mahaprabhu and then took prasada with Sanatan. After staying with him for two months, he started to feel his absence from Mahaprabhu too intensely and asked Sanatan for permission to return to Puri. Sanatan bid him goodbye, giving him sand from the place where Krishna held the rasa dance, a stone from Govardhana, a garland of gunja berries

and some dried ripe pilu fruits for Mahaprabhu. Jagadananda was delighted to return to Puri and see Mahaprabhu and the other devotees again. Mahaprabhu embraced him tightly and was extremely pleased with the gifts sent by Sanatan. Most of the devotees did not know how to eat pilu fruits, but because they were from Vrindavan, they enjoyed them anyway.

### **Advaita's message**

Because of his love for his mother, Mahaprabhu would send Jagadananda every year to Nabadwip with a prasadi cloth for her. Jagadananda would come and talk to her about Mahaprabhu and thus somewhat alleviate her suffering in separation from her son. The last time that he went, he went to Advaita Acharya's house to ask permission to return to Puri. On that occasion, Advaita gave a cryptic message to Jagadananda to deliver to Mahaprabhu. The riddle went as follows:

+++Tell the lord that I pay him a million obeisances and that I humbly submit to him the following: Tell the madman that everyone has gone mad. Tell the madman that they are no longer selling rice in the market. Tell the madman that the crazies are no longer good for anything. Tell the madman that this is what the madman said. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.19.19-21)

Bhaktivinoda Thakur explains this riddle in this way: <Tell Mahaprabhu that everyone has become intoxicated with love for Krishna and so in the marketplace of love, no one is buying the rice of Krishna prema any longer. Tell Mahaprabhu that the saintly madmen (aul) are so intoxicated with love that they are no longer involved in their material duties. Tell Mahaprabhu that Advaita said this in a state of complete intoxication of prema. In short, the message was that the purpose for which Mahaprabhu had been called to earth by Advaita had been completed. Now the lord may do as he wills.>

The date and place of Jagadananda Pandit's departure from this world are unknown.

## Vasudeva Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya

\*bhāṭṭacāryaḥ sarvabhaumaḥ purasid giṣpatir divi |

+++Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya was formerly Bṛhaspati, the guru of the gods.  
(Gaura-gaṇoddesa-dipika 119)

### Sarvabhauma's scholarship

When Krishnadas Kaviraj Goswami lists the branches of Sri Chaitanya, after listing those devotees like Paramananda Puri and Svarupa Damodar who came to join the Lord in Jagannath Puri, he enumerates those Bengali devotees who were already living in Puri when the Lord arrived there and who then met him for the very first time. Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya is considered the most important of these devotees.

+++One of the biggest branches of the Lord was Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya. Another was his brother-in-law, Gopinath Acharya. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 1.10.130)

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur's has commented on this Bengali verse as follows: <Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya's given name was Vasudeva. He was the son of Mahesvara Visarada, a celebrated resident of Vidyanagara, a village which lies about two and a half miles away from both Nabadwip and Campahaṭi. Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya was a student of Pakṣadhara Mishra, the head professor of what was at that time India's leading school of logic (nyaya) in Mithila in Bihar. Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya memorized the entire body of learning available there and then returned to Nabadwip to establish his own school for the study of logic. This caused a revolution in the history of this branch of learning, as the importance of Mithila was diminished to the profit of Nabadwip, which to this day still has the

reputation of being the leading centre of nyaya studies. According to some, the celebrated logician Raghunath Siromaṇi, author of the work *Didhiti*, studied under Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya. Whatever the truth of such statements, it is clear that Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya had tremendous learning in both Nyaya and Vedanta. Although he was a gr̥hastha, he took the kṣetra-sannyasa, vowing never to set foot outside of Jagannath Puri, and he taught Vedanta to students there. He gave discourses on Saṅkarācārya's commentary on the Vedanta to Mahāprabhu himself until he came to understand its real meaning by his grace.>

Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya was an aristocratic Brahmin of the Rarha class. From the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava Abhidhana, we learn that he took his birth in the first half of the 14th century of the Saka era. We also learn there that when he studied in Mithila, the nyaya scholars of that city attempted to maintain their monopoly on teaching this branch of philosophy by prohibiting their foreign students from copying the textbooks. For this reason it was impossible to either teach or study logic in Bengal at that time. Vasudeva Bhattacharya was endowed with marvellous powers of retention and he was thus able to memorize all the texts that he had studied in Mithila. When he returned to Bengal, he was thus able to transcribe these texts and make them readily available to his students. The scholar Dr. Dinesh Chandra Bhattacharya has argued that this is mere legend, however. He says that in fact Vasudeva Sarvabhauma learned the Navya-nyaya (<new logical method>) from his father, Visarada, and never went to Mithila. When Maharaj Prataparudra heard of his tremendous learning, he invited him to come to Puri and to become the chief scholar of his court.

### **Sarvabhauma, the teacher of Mayavada**

Even though he was a householder, Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya was so highly qualified that he became the teacher even of many sannyasis of the impersonalist school. In fact, the guru of the gods, Br̥haspati, took birth as Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya in order to support Mahāprabhu's pastime of delivering the Mayavadis. Little wonder, then, that he was an incomparable scholar!

Sri Chaitanya Mahāprabhu and all the Vaishnava acharyas have accepted as dogmatic truth that the object of worship (bhajaniya), the worshiper (bhajana-



kari) and the act of worship (bhajana) are all eternal principles. Pure devotional service cannot be present if the eternal existence of any one of these three principles is denied. According to the pure and true doctrines of Vaiṣṇavism, the Supreme Lord, who is the object of worship, possesses an eternal identity and his name, form, qualities and pastimes are all eternal and spiritual in nature. The Mayavadis who follow the path of knowledge deny the eternal spiritual character of the Lord's essence, name, form, qualities and pastimes. They hold that these are a products of the illusory energy. This is the source of the title <mayavada>, which means <illusory> (maya) , <form> (rupa), <doctrine> (vada). The Mayavadis hold that the form of the Lord is a fabrication that is only useful as a meditation aid for less advanced spiritual practitioners. They hold that Brahma, the formless, undifferentiated and potency-less form is the supreme truth. Nothing exists outside of this Brahman and thus the individual living being is identical with it.

The Mayavadis hold that devotional practice has a momentary value for the less advanced spiritual practitioners which helps them to attain the state of identification with Brahman, at which time it can be discarded as it has no status in the eternal truth. It is clear, then, that such a doctrine interferes with the attainment of the fifth and ultimate goal of life, love of God. The founders of the four schools of Vaishnava thought, Madhvacharya, Ramanujacharya, Vishnusvami and Nimbarka, as well as the Supreme Lord, Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu himself, have thus fought against the Mayavadi teachings of Sankaracharya characterized by the vivarta-vada or <doctrine of the apparent transformation of Brahman>. Those who seek their ultimate benefit accept the teaching given by Vedavyasa himself, known as sakti-pariṇama-vada (<the doctrine of the transformation of the energies of Brahman>).

Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu appeared in this most fortunate age of Kali in order to bestow the most elevated service to Krishna in the conjugal mood upon everyone, whether low or high-born. He gave the supreme gift of love for God without judging the qualifications of the recipient. Furthermore, he became incarnate with intention of destroying the desires which lead the living being away from the Lord and interfere with his attainment of love; he also bestowed upon them the desire for this love and the power through which it can be established in their hearts. Even with all this mercy, the Mayavadi doctrine remains the biggest obstacle to attaining love for Krishna.

Mahaprabhu delivered the Mayavadi Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya. Both

Vrindavan Das Thakur, not different from Vedavyasa himself, and Krishnadas Kaviraj Goswami have described how this took place in their biographies of the Lord. The essence of the accounts of the Chaitanya Bhagavat and Chaitanya Charitamrita are given below.

### **Sarvabhauma takes the Lord to his house**

At the age of 24, Mahaprabhu left Nabadwip to take sannyas from Keshava Bharati in Katwa. From there he went to Shantipur and then on to Puri. When he arrived at Atharo Nala, a bridge with eighteen arches which marks the entrance to the town of Jagannath Puri, the Lord saw the temple spire and had a vision of Krishna. He ran toward the temple in a trance of love and when he entered, ran towards the deity of Jagannath in order to embrace him. As he came close to the altar, he fell down in a faint. The temple watchmen and sevayats saw him lying unconscious in the temple, and thinking him to be a vagrant, prepared to beat and evict him from the temple.

Vasudeva Sarvabhauma happened to be there and he stopped them from so doing. He had been impressed by the beauty of the Lord as well as by the manifestations of spiritual ecstasy at the sight of Lord Jagannath. He could understand that this was no ordinary person. With the help of his disciples and the temple guards, Vasudeva Sarvabhauma had the unconscious Lord transported to his own home. He was quite anxious about the Lord's condition and placed a tuft of cotton before his nose to see if he was still breathing. He was relieved to see saw the cotton move slightly.

In the meantime, Nityananda Prabhu, Mukunda Datta, Jagadananda Pandit and Damodar Pandit arrived at the Lion's Gate entrance to the temple and heard from other visitors to the temple that Mahaprabhu had been removed and taken to Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya's house. Simultaneously, Sarvabhauma's brother-in-law, Gopinath Acharya, passed by there. Since he too was from Nabadwip, the Lord's devotees recognized him. Mukunda told him everything about Mahaprabhu's sannyas and his coming to Puri, as well as about his being taken to Sarvabhauma's house. Gopinath was thrilled to hear all this news and he took them to his brother-in-law's house.

The devotees were relieved and overjoyed to see the Lord there. Sarvabhauma paid his obeisances to Nityananda Prabhu and then told them to go and take darshan of Jagannath Deva, sending his son Candanesvara to accompany them as their guide. When they had returned, they began to sing the Holy Names aloud and this brought Mahaprabhu back to consciousness. In his paternal affection for the Lord, he prohibited him from going to the temple alone. He invited the Lord and his companions for lunch and sent them to take bath in the ocean. When they returned he fed them to their full satisfaction with varieties of Jagannath's mahaprasada.

When Sarvabhauma learned of Mahaprabhu's family background, he was very happy, for his father Mahesvara Visarada had been a good friend of Mahaprabhu's maternal grandfather, Nilambara Chakravarti. Sarvabhauma himself was much older than the Lord and so he felt protective toward him. He said, <The name Krishna Chaitanya which you have been given is a very good name. But you have been initiated into the Bharati line of sannyasis, which has only a moderately good reputation. I can get you reinitiation in a more prestigious line if you wish.>

Gopinath and the other devotees were disappointed to hear Sarvabhauma make this suggestion. Gopinath objected, <Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu is the Supreme Lord himself. He does not depend on any external formalities.> Sarvabhauma and his disciples debated these points with Gopinath at some length, and this has been described by Krishnadas Kaviraj Goswami in the sixth chapter of the Chaitanya Charitamrita's Madhya-lila.

Mahaprabhu himself asked the devotees not to argue with Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya because he was the Lord's senior and was only advising him out of affection for him. How could they object to this? The Lord, setting the example of one who is free from any hankering after prestige and who is ready to give all respect to others, indicated that he was willing to hear Sarvabhauma's advice.

Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya then said to the Lord that he was a handsome young man and that if he wanted to maintain his sannyas vows, he should study Vedanta diligently. This would awaken the required attitude of renunciation from the world in him. The Lord accepted his invitation to learn from him and for the next seven days he took instruction from him instructing in Vedanta.

When Sarvabhauma saw that Mahaprabhu was not asking any questions,

but simply listening silently, he said, <The study of Vedanta is demanding. A student who wishes to understand the material properly is generally obliged to ask questions to clarify difficult areas.>

The Lord answered, <You told me to listen, not to ask questions. So I have been listening. I find no difficulty understanding the meaning of the sutras for they are as self-evident as the sun. On the other hand, your explanations are confusing. I find them to hide the clear meaning of the sutras just like clouds covering the sun.>

Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya felt slighted by the Lord's comments and indeed felt somewhat angry. He started to debate the meaning of the word <Brahman> with the Lord. Sarvabhauma established that Brahman was without form or qualities, having recourse to various scriptures as evidence. The Lord showed with logic and scriptural references that Brahman possessed form and qualities. The Lord cited the atmarama verse from the Bhagavat and asked Sarvabhauma to explain it.

\*atmaramas ca munayo nirgrantha apy urukrame |

\*kurvanty ahaitukim bhaktim itthambhuta-guṇo hariḥ ||

+++Even those silent sages who are fully self-satisfied and freed from bondage perform causeless devotional service to Lord Hari, whose pastimes are wonderful, for such is the glorious nature of his qualities. (SB 1.7.10)

After Vasudeva Sarvabhauma had given nine different explanations of the verse, Mahaprabhu put on a display of superhuman scholarship by explaining the same verse in eighteen ways without even touching on those meanings given by Sarvabhauma. The scholar was astounded and speechless. He began slowly to understand that Mahaprabhu was not an ordinary human being, but the Supreme Lord himself. He started to regret his arrogance and finally fell down at the Lord's feet and begged him for forgiveness.

## Sarvabhauma becomes the Lord's devotee

The Lord in his kindness displayed a number of different divine forms to Sarvabhauma, starting with a four-armed Narayan form, then a two-armed Krishna form, holding a flute, and finally a six-armed form.

+++When Sarvabhauma saw the six-armed form of the Lord, as brilliant as a million suns, he fell down in a faint. (Chaitanya Bhagavat 3.3.107)

After seeing these divine manifestations, Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya wrote a panegyric of the Lord in a hundred Sanskrit verses. He wrote two of these verses down on a palm leaf and sent them to Mahaprabhu through Jagadananda Pandit. Jagadananda took the precaution of writing the verses down on the doorway before showing them to the Lord, and as a result of this foresight the verses were preserved, for Mahaprabhu tore the palm leaves up as soon as he saw them. The devotees saw the verses written on the doorframe and memorized them:

\*vairagya-vidya-nija-bhakti-yoga-

\*sikṣartham ekaḥ puruṣaḥ puraṇaḥ |

\*sri-kṛṣṇa-caitanya-sarira-dhari

\*kṛpambudhir yas tam ahaṁ prapadye ||

+++Let me take shelter of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the ocean of transcendental mercy, Sri Krishna, who has descended in the form of Lord Chaitanya Mahaprabhu to teach us detachment, real knowledge and his own devotional service.

\*kalan naṣṭaṁ bhakti-yogaṁ nijaṁ yaḥ

\*praduṣkartuṁ kṛṣṇa-caitanya-nama |

\*avirbhūtaḥ tasya padaravinde

\*gaḍham gaḍham liyate citta-bhṛṅgaḥ ||

+++The Supreme Personality of Godhead, who has taken the name of Sri Krishna Chaitanya, has appeared to reveal the ancient system of devotional service to himself which had almost been lost due to the influence of time. I pray that the honeybee of my mind will drink deeply of the nectar of his lotus feet. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.6.253-4; Chaitanya-candrodaya-nāṭaka 6.74)

A deity of Mahaprabhu's six-armed form is still worshipped today in the Jagannath temple at Puri.

### **Sarvabhauma's faith in mahaprasada**

One day not long afterward, Mahaprabhu came to Sarvabhauma's house with Jagannath's mahaprasada and offered it to him. Sarvabhauma had not yet bathed, cleaned his teeth or performed his morning rituals. Despite his ritually impure state, he joyfully honored the prasada, quoting a verse from the Padma-purāṇa:

\*suṣkaṁ paryuṣitaṁ vapi nitaṁ va dura-desataḥ |

\*prapti-matreṇa bhoktavyaṁ natra kala-vicaraṇa ||

+++One should honor prasada as soon as one receives it, whether it is dried up, stale or brought from afar. In this, there should be no consideration of time or circumstances. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.6.225)

Mahaprabhu was delighted to see that Sarvabhauma had developed faith in maha prasada and immediately started to dance in ecstasy. Sarvabhauma joined him and the two danced madly, shedding tears and trembling in their divine joy.

Mahaprabhu said,

+++Today I have been transported beyond the three worlds and have been taken to Vaikuntha. All my desires have been fulfilled simply because Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya has developed faith in maha prasada.

## **Sarvabhauma changes the words of the Bhagavat**

Sarvabhauma's attitude was so changed as a result of his conversion that one day, he recited a verse of the Srimad Bhagavatam, but in which he had altered a word.

\*tat te 'nukampaṁ su-samikṣamaṇo

\*bhunjana evatma-kṛtaṁ vipakam |

\*hr̥d-vag-vapurbbhir vidadhan namas te

\*jiveta yo bhakti-pade sa daya-bhak ||

+++One who lives his life while joyfully seeing everything as your compassion even as he experiences the adverse conditions arising from his past deeds, and constantly pays obeisances to you with his mind, words and body, is certain to inherit a place at your lotus feet, the object of all devotion. (SB 10.14.8)

Sarvabhauma had changed the word mukti-pade found in the original verse to bhakti-pade. Mahaprabhu explained that there was no need to change the words, inasmuch as mukti-pada (<the source of liberation>) is an epithet of Krishna. Vasudeva answered, <You are quite correct to say that the words mukti-pade refer to Krishna, but the word mukti was used customarily in its sense of impersonal liberation, and thus did not bring as great a pleasure as the word bhakti.

When the other scholars in Puri heard that Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya had been converted to devotion to Krishna, they all took shelter of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu.

## **Mahaprabhu leaves for the South**

Mahaprabhu took sannyas in the month of Magh and arrived in Puri in the month of Phalgun. He delivered Sarvabhauma Bhattacrya in the month of Chaitra and left for southern India in the month of Vaishakh. Nityananda Prabhu arranged for a certain Krishna Das Vipra to accompany Mahaprabhu as a servant. Before he left, Sarvabhauma gave the Lord a kaupina and bahirvasa and made a special request to the Lord to visit Ramananda Raya on the banks of the Godavari. At one time, Sarvabhauma had mocked Ramananda when he talked to him about devotional sentiment. Now, by the mercy of the Lord, he was able to recognize him for what he was, a highly advanced devotee of Krishna. His words to the Lord were:

+++Ramananda Raya is the governor of Vidyanagara on the bank of the Godavari. It is my request that you meet him without fail. Please do not avoid him, thinking that he is a sudra who is only interested in material activities. If anyone is fit to associate with you, it is Ramananda Raya; in this world there is no devotee equal to him in the knowledge of the divine sentiments. He is not only a most learned scholar, but very knowledgeable in the science of sacred rapture. You will learn the extent of his glories by talking with him. When I first met Ramananda Raya, I could not understand what he was talking about, nor his activities, all of which are transcendental. So, I made fun of him because he is a Vaishnava. Now, by your mercy, I am able to understand exactly how great he is. So too will you, once you converse with him. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.7.63-7)

## **Kashisvara and Govinda come to Puri**

After Ishvara Puripada's disappearance, his two disciples and personal servants, Kashisvara and Govinda, came to Puri in order to serve Mahaprabhu as they had been told to do by their guru. When Sarvabhauma learned that Govinda was a sudra, he asked Mahaprabhu why his guru had taken a person of a lower caste as his personal servant. Mahaprabhu answered, <The Supreme Lord is completely autonomous and his mercy does not take anyone's caste or creed into consideration. Service performed out of affection is thousands of times better than that which is performed out of a sense of duty or reverence. Krishna joyfully took his meal in the home of Vidura. However, as my guru's personal servant, Govinda is an object of reverence and therefore it is improper for me to



accept service from him. On the other hand, my guru has ordered him to serve me and I cannot ignore my spiritual master's order. What do you think should I do?>

Sarvabhauma responded to the Lord's request for advice by saying, <One should never ignore the orders of the spiritual master. Scripture says that this is the supreme guiding principle.>

### **Sarvabhauma seeks an audience for the King**

While Mahaprabhu had been travelling through the South, Maharaj Prataparudra had heard a great deal about his glories from Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya. As a result, the King developed a desire to have an audience with the Lord, but Sarvabhauma warned him that the Lord was a monk who had taken strict vows of renunciation, one of which was that he would not grant audiences to kings. Nevertheless, he promised the King that when the Lord returned, he would arrange a meeting with him by whatever means possible.

Later, after the Lord's return, all of Sarvabhauma's efforts to bring the King into the Lord's presence failed. Subsequently, Nityananda Prabhu and other devotees glorified the King's qualities to the Lord, which caused him to change his attitude somewhat, despite which he continued to refuse to give the King an audience. He agreed, however, to give him an outer garment. Nityananda gave the Lord's cloth to Sarvabhauma to bring to the King. As soon as Prataparudra touched the cloth, he experienced the symptoms of love of God.

### **The Lord cures Sarvabhauma's son-in-law**

When the Lord's Bengali associates had returned home after the caturmasya period, Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya invited the Lord to eat at his house for an entire month. The Lord refused, saying that it was against the principles of a

sannyasi to take regular invitations in that way. Sarvabhauma reduced his invitation to twenty days, then to fifteen days, but the Lord continued to turn him down, agreeing to go only once. Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya continued to press him to accept more than one invitation and the Lord finally agreed to go for five days a month. Sarvabhauma then asked Paramananda Puri to also come for five days, Svarupa Damodar for four, and each of the Lord's eight other sannyasi associates for two days each. He told the Lord that it was difficult to offer proper service when there were many guests, so he asked him to please come alone or with Svarupa Damodar.

Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya's wife, who was known as <Ṣaṭhi's mother>, was very devoted to the Lord and was very excited to hear that he was going to be coming to their house to eat. She was a very good cook and had prepared a large number of vegetable preparations as well as cakes and sweets. Sarvabhauma set the Lord a place in a quiet room, putting out an uncut banana leaf from a mature tree (which produces a giant banana cluster of thirty two hands) upon which he placed all the different preparations.

Mahaprabhu saw the elaborate preparations made for offering food to Radha and Govinda and to serve him, and praised Sarvabhauma for his efforts. When he sat down to eat, Sarvabhauma's son-in-law, Amogha, came to watch. Sarvabhauma knew Amogha's fault-finding character and so had kept a stick to chase him away so that he would not disturb the Lord. However, he was so absorbed in serving the Lord that Amogha managed to sneak in. He saw the lavish feast, he immediately began to criticize:

+++<There is enough food here to satisfy a dozen people and yet this sannyasi is going to eat all this by himself?> (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.15.248)

Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya flared up in anger, took the stick which he had at the ready and went after Amogha, who fled as fast as he could. Sarvabhauma's wife, shocked on hearing her son-in-law insult the Lord, began to flail herself on the head and chest and repeatedly said, <May Ṣaṭhi become a widow!>

The Lord himself laughed off Amogha's trivial criticisms and tried to pacify Sarvabhauma and his wife. The next day, however, Amogha came down with cholera. Sarvabhauma thought that justice was being done, that it was a suitable punishment for the offensive words spoken by his son-in-law. When Gopinath Acharya informed Mahaprabhu that Sarvabhauma and his wife were

both fasting and that Amogha was on his deathbed with cholera, the merciful Lord immediately went to Amogha's bedside, placed his hand on his chest and said,

+++<This Brahmin's heart is naturally holy; it is therefore a proper place for Krishna to sit. Why have you allowed brutish enviousness a place in it, causing it to become contaminated? Fortunately, all your sins have been destroyed through your relationship with Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya. When the heart is cleansed of all contamination, one is able to chant the name of Krishna. So, get up, Amogha, and chant Krishna's names! The Supreme Lord will bestow his mercy upon you before long.> (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.15.274-7)

The Lord's touch and his compassionate words had an immediate effect on Amogha. He rose up and started chanting, <Krishna! Krishna!> The eight symptoms of ecstatic love manifested on his body. He remembered his offensive words to the Lord and in his remorse began to slap himself repeatedly on the cheeks until his face was swollen and Gopinath Acharya stopped him. The Lord said to Amogha that he was dear to him because of his relationship with Sarvabhauma.

+++<Everyone in Sarvabhauma's house, even the servants, are dear. Even his household dog is dear to me, so will I not have affection for his relatives? (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.15.284)

The Lord then went to Sarvabhauma's house and asked him and his wife to forgive their son-in-law, whose offenses were just the result of immaturity. After bringing them around, he had them break their fast.

### **The Lord praises Sarvabhauma**

Sarvabhauma participated in many other activities with the Lord in Puri, such as the water sports and the feasts of prasad. When Vallabha Bhatta came to Puri, the Lord glorified Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya to him as follows:

+++<Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya is a scholar in the six philosophical systems.

Though professor to the world in these doctrines, he is a superlative devotee of the Lord. He taught me the extent of the discipline of devotion. Through him I have learned that union with Krishna is the essence of all mystical systems.>  
(Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.7.21-2)

## **King Sri Prataparudra Deva**

\*indradyumno maharajo jagannatharcakah pura |

\*jataḥ prataparudraḥ san sama indreṇa so'dhuna ||

+++Indradyumna, who previously worshiped Lord Jagannath, was born as Prataparudra, with the same opulences as Indra himself.(Gaura-gaṇoddesa-dipika 118)[FN: In a Satyayuga during the second half of Brahma's lifetime, a certain king named Indradyumna was born into the Dynasty of the Sun. He ruled over the kingdom of Malava and had his capital at Avantipura. He was a great devotee of Vishnu, as was his priest Vidyapati. In the first half of Brahma's life, Jagannath had appeared in Nilachala as Nila Madhava with the purpose of delivering the conditioned souls of this world. He was served by a tribal king named Visvvasu. Nila Madhava manifested the deity form of Jagannath through these three persons: Indradyumna, Vidyapati and Visvvasu. The Lord appeared in three forms at the place known as Baṅki Mohana in order to show his mercy for King Indradyumna. These three deities are, of course, Balaram, Subhadra and Jagannath.]

## **Prataparudra's ancestors**

The ancestors of King Prataparudra are listed in the Orissan history, Madala Punji. It is said there that when King Kajjalabhanu, the last ruler of the Ganga dynasty, was absent from the kingdom during wartime, his minister Kapilendra Deva led a coup and took over the throne. Also known as Kapilesvara, this king

founded the Gajapati dynasty of Orissa. Kapilendra's queen was Parvati, to whom was born their son and successor, Purushottam Deva, Prataparudra's father. Prataparudra's mother was Padmavati or Rupambika.

Prataparudra was an associate of Lord Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and is considered a branch of Gadadhara Pandit Goswami. During the Lord's lifetime, he was an independent king of considerable power. His capital city was Cuttack (Kaṭaka). He, his wives and sons, were all devotees of Mahaprabhu. His chief wife (or paṭṭa-mahiṣi) was named Gauri. She had five sons, the eldest of whom was named Purushottam Jana. This is mentioned in Bhakti-ratnakara (6.65).

### **Prataparudra, disciple of Kashi Mishra**

King Prataparudra accepted Kashi Mishra as his spiritual master and served him with great dedication. While staying at Puri, he would daily go to Kashi Mishra's house and massage his guru's feet after his midday meal. At this time he would inquire about the state of Jagannath's service, etc.

+++Prataparudra had a regular duty which he performed whenever he was at Nilachala. He would daily massage Kashi Mishra's feet and would hear a report on Jagannath's service. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.

Mahaprabhu stayed at Kashi Mishra's house in a one-roomed cottage on the veranda. In Orissan, such a small cottage is called a gambhira.

We also learn from Ramananda Raya's Jagannath-vallabha Nāṭaka that Prataparudra was a mighty and heroic military leader, despite which he maintained a humble demeanor. He was a generous and open-hearted Vaishnava. It is also said there that he was devoted to the promotion of learning. Every one of Mahaprabhu's biographies states that he received the Lord's mercy. Kavi Karṇapura also writes about Prataparudra's military qualities in his Chaitanya-candrodaya Nāṭaka. He protected brahmanical culture and was especially benevolent towards the Vaishnava religion. Many works of Vaishnava history dating to that period have given testimony that he was the object of affection for Mahaprabhu, Ramananda Raya, Kashi Mishra and Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya.

Many books have been attributed to Prataparudra, such as Saraswati-vilasa, Pratapa-martaṇḍa, Kautuka-cintamaṇi, Nirṇaya-saṅgraha, etc. In fact, the first two of these books were written by two of his court scholars, Lolla Lakshmidhara and Ramakṛṣṇa, respectively. There is a legend that when Mahaprabhu left Puri for Vrindavan, Prataparudra felt such separation that he had a murti of the Lord made. He assigned 54 Brahmins to the service of the deity, as well as giving a large tract of land for its maintenance. In the royal palace at Puri, deities of Gaura-Nityananda and Gaura-Gadadhara are worshiped alongside numerous other images.

### **Purushottam fights for Jagannath's honor**

During Prataparudra's reign, his kingdom stretched as far as Rajamahendri in modern Andhra Pradesh. It is not necessary to go into detail here, but the following is a brief summary of some of the historical background.

Prataparudra's father, Purushottam Deva, retrieved lands which had been lost to his kingdom as well as expanding it further through his own might. Being entirely surrendered to Jagannath, he was successful in extending Orissan lands as far as Rajamahendri, or Rajahmundry. It was said that Jagannath himself would appear on the battlefield to assist the king in his fight.

On one occasion, marriage was contracted between Purushottam and the king of Kanci's daughter Padmavati. The king of Kanci came to Puri to have a look at the groom. He arrived there during the time of the Rathayatra and saw his prospective son-in-law sweeping the parade ground before the chariot of the Lord, as was the custom. Though Purushottam was sweeping the ground with a golden broom, the king of Kanci thought that it was an insult to his daughter to marry her to someone who took the tasks of a sweeper, the lowest outcaste of Hindu society. He thus cancelled the marriage between them. The king of Kanci was a devotee of Gaṇesa, and had no great faith in Jagannath.

When Purushottam heard of the sovereign of Kanci's faithlessness, he became angry and attacked his territories with a large force. At first he was unable to secure a victory, so he prostrated himself before Jagannath and surrendered to him. This time Jagannath assured him that he would aid his war effort and so

Purushottam took up arms again.

As Purushottam passed through the village of Anandapura, about 12 miles from Puri, a milk maid said to him, <Two horsemen passed through here. They bought milk, yogurt and buttermilk from me and paid for it with a ring. They told me to give you the ring and ask for money in exchange.> When Purushottam looked at the ring, he was able to recognize that the two horsemen had been none other than Jagannath and Balaram. He rewarded the milkmaid and set off to certain victory against Kanci. He returned with the jewelled throne of that kingdom and offered it to the service of Jagannath. He also took the Gaṇesa deity which was worshipped in Kanci back to Puri. In this way, Jagannath Deva crushed the arrogant pride of the king of Kanci. It is said that Gaṇesa tried to cast obstacles in Purushottam's way during the battle. Since he went against his customary role of eliminating obstacles, he was given the name Bhaṇḍa (<deceitful>) Gaṇesa.

Kanci's king personally returned to Puri with his daughter Padmavati and offered her as Purushottam's bride while he was sweeping the Rathayatra route for Jagannath. Purushottam kept his promise and remained king of Puri until 1497 AD. He was followed by Prataparudra who remained on the throne until his death in 1540. Other than the abovementioned queen Gauri, he also had four other wives, named Padma, Padmalaya, Ila and Mahila.

### **Prataparudra wishes to meet Mahaprabhu**

Prataparudra was the most fortunate member of the Gajapati dynasty of Orissan kings, as he received the mercy of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, the combined form of Radha and Krishna. Even though Mahaprabhu felt that it was not beneficial for a sannyasi to come into contact with a worldly man like a king, his disdain for him was pure show. Inwardly, he was won over by the king's pure devotional attitude and he showered him generously with his causeless mercy. Krishnadas Kaviraj Goswami has described how the Lord taught the people of this world through King Prataparudra in his Chaitanya Charitamrita. The story is told in the eleventh chapter of the Madhya-lila.

At first Prataparudra approached Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya to tell him of his

desire to meet Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. He asked him so many times that finally Saravabhauma asked Mahaprabhu to allow the king to see him. As soon as he heard the request, however, the Lord covered his ears and said, <For a sannyasi like myself, to see a king is the same as looking at a woman-- it is pure poison.> (2.11.7) Even though the king was a great devotee, the fact that he was a king made him an object of fear, like a black snake.

### **Prataparudra's dream**

In the fifth chapter of the Antya-khaṇḍa of the Chaitanya Bhagavat, Vrindavan Das Thakur has described the King's deep desire to meet with the Lord as well as a dream in which the King saw that Lord Jagannath and Lord Chaitanya Mahaprabhu are non-different. The first time the King saw Mahaprabhu dance, he observed body covered in dust and his mouth filled with frothing saliva from his ecstatic dancing and so felt some doubts.

That very night, he saw Jagannath in a dream. Jagannath too was covered in dust and saliva; then he saw the same dust-covered form of Lord Chaitanya Mahaprabhu sitting on Lord Jagannath's *siṁhasana* along with the Deity. From this amazing dream he understood the divine nature of Lord Chaitanya Mahaprabhu.

+++[Jagannath said,] <Just look! My body is covered with dust and saliva. You are a king and the son of a king. Surely it is not proper for you to touch someone like myself.> Having said this, Lord Jagannath looked at his servant and laughed. In that very moment, the King saw Chaitanya Mahaprabhu sitting on the altar alongside the Lord. (Chaitanya Bhagavat 3.5.175-7)

### **Ramananda and Sarvabhauma try to intervene**

One day, Prataparudra came to Puri with Ramananda Raya and other members of



his retinue. Ramananda knew of the king's eagerness to meet Mahaprabhu, so when he went to visit the Lord, he tried to persuade him to allow such a meeting to take place, telling him of the king's deep affection for him. He added that the king had given him leave from his job with full pay to allow him to stay with the Lord. When he heard how the king was filled with love for him and how he had served his devotee, Mahaprabhu replied: <The king has shown so much love for you that the Lord is sure to accept him on the basis of this virtue alone.>

\*ye me bhakta-janaḥ partha na me bhaktas ca te janaḥ |

\*mad-bhaktanaṁ tu ye bhaktas te me bhaktatama mataḥ ||

+++Those who claim to be my devotees are in fact not so. The best of my devotees are those who are devoted to my servants.

However, Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya again entreated the Lord on the king's behalf to allow such a meeting to take place, the Lord said that under no circumstances would he come face to face with a king, and that if people continued to ask him to do so, he would leave Puri and go to live elsewhere. When the king heard this, he was desolated. He said,

+++<The Lord has descended just to deliver all kinds of sinful, lowborn persons. He has even delivered sinners like Jagai and Madhai. But it seems that he has made a promise to deliver the entire universe with the exception of someone named Prataparudra. He may have sworn not to see me, but I have sworn to give up my life if I cannot see him. Without Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's mercy, my life and kingdom are worthless.> (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.11.45-6, 48-9)

Vasudeva Sarvabhauma thought up a way to arrange a meeting between Prataparudra and the Lord. During the Rathayatra festival, after having danced in the sankirtan with his devotees, the Lord customarily went into a flower garde to rest. Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya suggested to the king that he take this opportunity to approach the Lord dressed as a common person and to recite the verses of the Rasa-pancadhyaya from the Bhagavat. The Lord would be in a trance-like state and would be transported by the recital of the loves of Krishna and the gopis. In this condition, he would surely embrace the king. The king was relieved to hear these words of advice.

When the Lord returned from his pilgrimage to the South of India, Prataparudra sent a letter to Sarvabhauma in which he once again expressed his desire to meet with the Lord. Sarvabhauma showed the letter to the other devotees and all were duly impressed by the degree of devotion exhibited by the King. Nityananda Prabhu decided that he would speak to the Lord, not about meeting the King but simply about his personal qualities and actions. He said the following to the Lord:

+++We want to submit everything to you, whether or not it is fitting. The King has decided that he will become a yogi if he cannot meet you. He says, <I will pierce my ears and place earrings there and become a mendicant. I have no desire to enjoy this kingdom without the mercy of Gaurahari. When will I be able to see the Lord's moonlike face to my full satisfaction and when will I be able to hold his lotus feet to my heart?> (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.12.19-21)

Though the Lord listened to Nityananda's account of the King's mood, he took a hard-line position in order to teach the world. He said that for the sake of his spiritual advancement, a sannyasi is forbidden to even see a King. If he were to engage in such forbidden acts, Damodar Pandit would criticize him. Damodar Pandit answered, saying:

<I am merely an insignificant jiva, so what power do I have to tell you what to do? I shall see you meet the King of your own volition. The King loves you very much, and you are influenced by a devotee's feelings of love. It is the power of this love for you that will reward him with the opportunity to touch you. Although you are the Supreme Lord and are completely independent, still it is your nature to be influenced by the love and affection of your devotees.> (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.12.27-9)

Nityananda added that people who experience unrequited love tend to commit suicide. Thus, in order to save the King's life, he asked Mahaprabhu to give him a used loincloth (bahirvasa). The Lord could not refuse, so Nityananda asked Govinda for the loincloth and sent it to the King via Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya. Prataparudra was overjoyed to receive the cloth and he began to worship it as though it were the Lord himself.

## **Mahaprabhu sees the King's son**

When Ramananda Raya received the King's permission to come to live near the Lord in Puri, he also described Maharaj Prataparudra's intense desire to see the Lord and tried to persuade the Lord to fulfill that desire. Mahaprabhu spoke out of a desire to establish the rules of conduct for the renounced orders: he said that just as even a slight mark on a piece of white cloth immediately becomes noticeable, the smallest character flaws of a sannyasi are noticed by the general public. A jug full of milk is contaminated by even a drop of liquor; similarly, though King Prataparudra may possess all virtues, the very fact that he is a king makes his association contaminated.

However, the Lord was unable to completely ignore Ramananda Raya's request, because of their close friendship. He himself suggested that he could see the King's son, for according to the maxim *atma vai jayate putraḥ* (<one is reborn as one's own son>), there is no difference between the father and the son. When he learned of the Lord's will, Prataparudra immediately sent his son to him. When Mahaprabhu saw the teenaged prince with his almond eyes and dark skin wearing a yellow cloth, he immediately thought of Krishna. He embraced the lad which caused him to experience the ecstatic transformations of prema. The King embraced him and felt the same ecstasies through the medium of his son. From that day onward, the King's son was considered one of Mahaprabhu's associates.

### **The King's humble service to Lord Jagannath**

A devotee who is free from pride, is surrendered and without any ulterior motive, is eligible to receive the Lord's mercy.

\**dinere adhika daya karen bhagavan* |

\**kulin paṇḍit dhanir baṛa abhiman* ||

+++The Lord bestows greater blessings on the meek and humble. Those who are well-born, who are learned, and who are rich are filled with pride. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.4.68)

Maharaj Prataparudra was without any pride, even though he had so much material power as well as possessing all good qualities. Mahaprabhu had noticed his willingness to engage in even menial service and was pleased with him and ready to give him his mercy, even though externally he made a show of being hard-hearted.

+++[While Lord Jagannath was being carried from the throne to the car] King Prataparudra personally engaged in the Lord's service by sweeping the road with a gold-handled broom. He sprinkled the road with sandalwood-scented water. Although he was the owner of the royal throne, he engaged in such menial service. Although the King was the most exalted respectable person, still he accepted menial service for Lord Jagannath and was therefore a suitable candidate for Jagannath's mercy. Mahaprabhu was happy to see the King's service to the Lord and it was through this service, that he finally received the mercy of the Lord. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.13.15-18)

The Lord's mercy has no cause. Only he knows who will receive his blessings and when. Often, he does so in an indirect manner rather than doing it openly. The Lord was pleased by the King's engagement of a menial service and even though he did not make a public show of mercy to him, he did reveal his personal form to the King and thus fulfill his deepest desire.

### **Haricandana is slapped by Srivasa Pandit**

In the thirteenth chapter of the Madhya-lila, these events are described. During the Rathayatra festival, the Bengali devotees were divided into seven groups for chanting the Holy Names. Each one of these groups thought that Mahaprabhu was with them alone. Prataparudra was able to witness this pastime and felt wonder and ecstatic love. All this was Mahaprabhu's indirect mercy.

When Mahaprabhu himself wanted to dance in front of Jagannath's chariot, he would gather the seven sampradayas together into one kirtan group. Meanwhile, the devotees formed three rings of protection around the Lord. The innermost line of defense was headed by Nityananda Prabhu, the second by Kashisvara Pandit, Mukunda and other devotees. Prataparudra and his soldiers formed the

outermost circle to defend the Lord from the crowds.

Maharaj Prataparudra watched mesmerized while the Lord danced, resting his hand on the shoulder of his minister (mahapatra) Haricandana. At that time, Srivasa Pandit, who was also absorbed in watching the Lord's ecstatic dancing, came and stood in front of the King, blocking his vision. Haricandana repeatedly tried to push Srivasa to one side, telling him to let the King see until finally Srivasa lost his temper and slapped Haricandana. When Haricandana became angry and was about to respond to Srivasa's aggression, the King said:

<You are very fortunate, for you have been graced by the touch of Srivasa Thakur. I have not been so fortunate. You should feel obliged to him.>

### **Prataparudra catches the Lord**

In Mahaprabhu's lila we find a delightful mixture of the highest manifestations of love, mercy and teachings for the general public. As he pulled the chariot of Lord Jagannath, Mahaprabhu was absorbed in the mood of Radha and the other gopis at their meeting with Lord Krishna who had come to Kurukṣetra from Dvaraka on the occasion of the solar eclipse. Thus Mahaprabhu wished to drag Krishna (in his Jagannath form) from the site of his majestic pastimes in Kurukṣetra, represented by Nilachala (the Jagannath temple) to the site of his sweet, loving pastimes in Vrindavan, represented by Suryacala or the Gundicha temple. Sometimes, Mahaprabhu would lag behind as he tried to understand the depth of the gopis' loving power; Jagannath himself would seem to understand the Lord's emotions and slow down the movement of the chariot. Thus, the Lord danced more frenziedly as he and Lord Jagannath went deeper and deeper into ecstatic communication. As he danced in this divyonmada state, the Lord seemed about to fall downCjust in the very spot where King Prataparudra was standing. The King immediately held the Lord to keep him from falling. This was how the Lord blessed the King and allowed him to touch him, but he immediately began to rebuke himself for having allowed a materialistic person to touch him. The inconceivable activities of the Lord contain both delightful manifestation of emotion and teachings for the world, neither of which are easy to understand.

+++When he saw that it was the King, Mahaprabhu condemned himself, saying, <O, how pitiful it is that I have touched a person interested in mundane affairs.> ... Even though the Lord had had made up his mind to see the King upon seeing him act as a sweeper in the service of Lord Jagannath, he still externally expressed feelings of anger in order to warn his personal associates.

## **The Lord embraces the King**

There is a spot about halfway between the Jagannath temple and Gundicha, or halfway between Sraddhabalu and Ardhasani Devi, which is called Balagaṇḍi. During the Rathayatra, Lord Jagannath's chariot stops here at midday so that the He can rest. The custom is that all devotees, whether important or less so, can make food offerings to him on this occasion. Because of the large crowds which normally accumulate, Mahaprabhu went to rest in a flower garden near a coconut grove. Raja Prataparudra remembered Sarvabhauma's counsel and approached the Lord in the dress of a commoner and began to massage his feet. He began to recite gopi-gita verses from the Rasa-lila of the Srimad Bhagavatam, starting with the following verse:

\*jayati te'dhikaṁ janmana vrajaḥ

\*srayate indira sasvad atra hi |

\*dayita dṛsyataṁ dikṣu tavakas

\*tvayi dhṛtasavas tvaṁ vicinvate ||

+++The glories of Vraja-bhumi have increased

ever since you took birth here;

since then, the goddess of fortune

has taken up residence here.

O beloved! We whose lives depend completely on you

are searching for you, please show yourself to us. (SB 10.31.1).

Mahaprabhu was ecstatic and told the King to go on reciting. The King reached the ninth verse of the chapter:

\*tava kathamṛtaṁ tapta-jivanam

kavibhir iḍitaṁ kalmaṣapaham |

\*sravaṇa-maṅgalaṁ srimad-atataṁ

\*bhuvi grṇanti te bhurida janah ||

+++Nectarean discussions about you

give life to those who are suffering;

the philosophers have glorified them

for they destroy all of one's sins.

They are auspiciousness for the ears,

they bring the fortune of love for Krishna.

Those most munificent of beings

distribute these wonderful words

throughout the world.

As soon as Mahaprabhu heard this verse, he became ecstatic with love and embraced the King, while repeating the word bhurida (<most munificent beings>) from the verse. Though the Lord is all-knowing, he asked the King his identity. Prataparudra answered that he was the servant of the servant of the Lord. Satisfied with the King's answer, the Lord revealed to him a glorious divine form. All the devotees were overjoyed to see that the King had finally received the Lord's mercy.

When the ratha was being pulled from Balagaṇḍi to Gundicha, it suddenly came to a stop and even the strongest men and intoxicated elephants were unable to move it. Maharaj Prataparudra became anxious. When the Lord saw that everyone was worried, he removed the strong men and the elephants and told his own devotees to take the ropes. Mahaprabhu himself went to behind the chariot and began to push it with his head. The chariot started to move with a great rumbling noise. This feat amazed King Prataparudra and the rest of his entourage.

### **Prataparudra sees other wonderful pastimes**

While spending the four months in Puri, the Bengali Vaishnavas witnessed numerous pastimes of Lord Jagannath. On the Nandotsava, the day after the Krishna's birth ceremony, Mahaprabhu would dress up as a cowherd and put on a play about the Vraja pastimes with his devotees. Prataparudra also participated in this lila.

The Lord made his first attempt to go to Vrindavan, he left Puri on Vijaya-dasami and went to Cuttack where he met Prataparudra in a garden under a bakula tree. Here too, the Lord saw the great prema of the King and embraced him, drenching him in his own tears of love. From that day on, the Lord was given the epithet Prataparudra-santrata, <the savior of King Prataparudra>.

Bhavananda Raya's son Gopinath Paṭṭanayaka was placed on the scaffold by the King's son for having misappropriated state funds. Some devotees came to Mahaprabhu to ask him to intervene in order to save Gopinath's life. The Lord was unhappy at being asked to get involved in such mundane affairs and made up his mind to go to Alalanath. The King himself was disturbed at hearing this news and prepared himself to give up everything in order to keep the Lord in Puri. These are all further proofs of the extent of the King's love for the Lord's lotus feet.

+++When King Prataparudra heard all these details, he felt great pain in his mind. <I shall give up all that is owed me,> he said, <if Mahaprabhu only stays here at Jagannath Puri. Even a moment's contact with the Lord is worth more



than millions of cintamani stones. I care nothing for this small sum of 200,000 kahanas (FN: a kahana equals 1280 cowries.); I would indeed offer everything not only this, but my life and kingdom at the lotus feet of the Lord.>

### **A song written by King Prataparudra**

In the description of Bengali manuscripts in the Banga Sahitya Parishad library in Calcutta, a notice is given of a song with the signature of Prataparudra. There is some doubt as to whether the song is indeed his or not. A portion of that song is as follows:

### **A prayer to Radha**

+++

I will become an ornament on your body,

the ankle bells upon your feet.

I will become the cakora who gazes

at the moons of your fingernails,

the bee who buzzes around your lotus feet.

I will become the mirror you look into,

the whisk that fans you.

And I have yet another desire

Let me become a layer of fine dust on your feet.

If I cannot become the dust of your feet,  
then be merciful and do with me as you please,  
this is Prataparudra's prayer.

When Mahaprabhu disappeared, Prataparudra felt great separation from him.  
This is described in the Bhakti-ratnakara as follows:

+++When the King heard that the Lord had departed, he fell to the ground and began lamenting. Hitting his head again and again, he fell unconscious and only the association of Ramananda Raya kept him alive. The King was unable to bear the absence of the Lord and so he left Puri, remaining elsewhere for the rest of his days. (Bhakti-ratnakara 3.217-19)

Maharaj Prataparudra's descendants are: (1) Kaluwa Pratapa, (2) Kakharuwa Pratapa, (3) Govinda Vidyadhara, (4) Cakra Pratapa, (5) Narasimha Deva, (6) Raghurama Deva, (7) Mukunda Deva Haricandana, (8) Ramachandra Deva, (9) Purushottam Deva, (10) Nrisingha Deva, (11) Gangadhara Deva, (12) Balabhadra Deva, (13) Mukunda Deva II, (14) Divyasimha Deva, (15) Hare Krishna Deva, (16) Gopinath Deva, (17) Ramachandra Deva II, (18) Virakesari Deva, (19) Divyasimha Deva II, (20) Mukunda Deva III, (21) Ramachandra Deva III, (22) Virakesari Deva II, (23) Divyasimha Deva III, (24) Mukunda Deva IV, (25) Ramachandra Deva IV, (26) Virakesari Deva III, (27) Divyasimha Deva IV.

## **Sri Ramananda Raya**

\*priya-narma-sakha kascid arjunaḥ paṇḍavo 'rjunaḥ |

\*militva samabhud ramananda-rayāḥ prabhoḥ priyaḥ ||

\*ato radha-kṛṣṇa-bhakti-prema-tattvadikaṁ kṛti |

\*ramanando gauracandraṁ pratyavarṇayad anvaham ||

\*lalitety ahur eke yat tad eke nanumanyante |

\*bhavanandaṁ prati praha gauro yat tvaṁ pṛthapatih ||

\*gopyarjuniyaya sardham ekibhuyapi paṇḍavaḥ |

\*arjuno yad raya-ramananda ity ahur uttamaḥ ||

\*arjuniyabhavat turṇaṁ arjuno ‘pi ca paṇḍavaḥ |

\*iti padmottara-khaṇḍe vyaktam eva virajate |

\*tasmad etat trayam ramananda-raya-mahasayaḥ ||

+++There are two Arjunas in Krishna lila: one is a priya-narma-sakha in Vraja, the other is one of the Paṇḍavas. These two combined to become Ramananda Raya, the dear companion of Mahāprabhu. He was very knowledgeable in the teachings of loving devotion to Radha and Krishna, which he described to Gauracandra on a daily basis. Some people say that Ramananda Raya was Lalita Sakhi, while others do not. Mahāprabhu himself told Bhavananda Raya that he was Paṇḍu, the husband of Kunti and father of the Paṇḍavas. The Paṇḍava Arjuna also united with the gopi named Arjuniya. Thus the most aware say that Ramananda Raya combined all these three personalities. Proof of this is found in the Padmapuraṇa, where it is stated that the Paṇḍava Arjuna became the gopi Arjuniya. (Gaura-gaṇoddesa-dipika 120-124)

As stated in these verses from Gaura-gaṇoddesa-dipika, some people hold that Ramananda Raya was an incarnation of Lalita. Some others are of the opinion that he was Visakha. Srila In his commentary on Chaitanya Charitamrita (2.8.23), Bhaktivinoda Thakur writes, <The same love which Visakha had for Radha and Krishna in Vraja, and that love which Radha and Krishna had for Visakha, awakened in them when they met.> Thus it is clear that Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur saw Ramananda Raya as Visakha.

Ramananda Raya was one of the Lord’s three and a half most intimate associates.

+++The Lord accepted Sikhi Mahiti’s sister as one of Radha’s friends. In the

entire world, there were only three and a half devotees who were so worthy. They were Svarupa Damodar Goswami, Ramananda Raya and Sikhi Mahiti. His sister was the half person. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.2.105-6)

## **Ramananda's social status**

Ramananda Raya's father was named Bhavananda Raya. He was born in a family of the Orissan karaṇa caste, an administrative clan like the kayasthas. He was previously King Paṇḍu. He had five sons, of whom Ramananda was the oldest. The other four brothers were Gopinath Paṭṭanayaka, Kalanidhi, Sudhanidhi and Vaṇinatha Paṭṭanayaka. The Lord states in Chaitanya Charitamrita: <You are Paṇḍu himself, and your wife is Kunti. Your five sons are the five Paṇḍavas.> (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.10.53)

Bhavananda Raya made his home in Brahmagiri or Alalanath, about 12 miles west of Puri. Manohara Raya, a descendant of Ramananda Raya, has written his family's history. Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur has summarized some details of this account in his Anubhaṣya and concludes: <Orissan society considers the karaṇa community to be part of the sudra caste. Ramananda Raya was born into this community. Nevertheless, though he was considered by society to be a sudra by birth, he was a de facto Brahmin, indeed, as a Vaishnava paramahansa, he was spiritual master to the Brahmins.>

By Krishna's will, the creator Brahma himself appeared in an outcaste family in order to show that one's family and one's race have absolutely no importance. Born as a Muslim, Hari Das still enriched Lord Gauranga's pastimes.

+++Hari Das Thakur was born in a low-caste family on the Lord's order in order to show that caste and class have no importance at all. All the scriptures say that a devotee of Vishnu, though born in a lowly family, is still worshipable by all. What will one's caste do for one is born in a high-caste but does not worship Krishna? He will go to hell in spite of his high birth. Hari Das took a low birth just to bear witness to these scriptural statements. He is comparable to Prahlad who was born in a family of demons, or Hanuman, who was born a monkey.

They belong only superficially to low castes. (Chaitanya Bhagavat 1.16.237-240)

A Vaishnava is beyond the qualities of the material nature. Anyone who considers a devotee in terms of his birth or race is destined for a hellish existence.

\*arceye siladhir guruṣu naramatir vaiṣṇave jatibuddhir

\*viṣṇor va vaiṣṇavanam kalimalamathane padatirthe ‘mbubuddhiḥ |

\*sriviṣṇor namni mantre sakala-kaluṣahe sabda-samanya-buddhir

\*viṣṇau sarvesvarese tad-itara-samadhir yasya va naraki saḥ ||

+++Anyone who considers the deity to be nothing but stone,

+++ the guru to be an ordinary human being,

+++ or the Vaishnava to be a member of a particular caste or race,

+++who takes the holy water which has washed

+++ Vishnu or the Vaiṣṇava’s feet

+++ and can destroy all the sins of the age of Kali,

+++ to be ordinary water,

+++who thinks that the name or mantra of Viṣṇu,

+++ which destroys all evils, is the same as any other sound,

+++or who takes Vishnu to be same as anything other than him,

+++ has a hellish nature. (Padma-purāṇa)

According to the Bhajana-nirṇaya, Ramananda was the disciple of Raghavendra Puri and grand-disciple of Madhavendra Puri.

## **Sarvabhauma tells the Lord about Ramananda**

Raya Ramananda was King Prataparudra's governor in Vidyanagara and later was one of his ministers.

The Lord took sannyas in the month of Magh and arrived in Puri during the month of Phalgun. After celebrating the Dola Yatra in Puri, Mahaprabhu delivered Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya in the month of Chaitra. In the month of Vaishakh, he set off on his pilgrimage to South India. Though Mahaprabhu had decided to travel alone, Nityananda Prabhu convinced him to take a servant, Krishna Das, as a travelling companion. As he was leaving, Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya gave the Lord four kaupinas and loincloths, and requested him to visit Ramananda Raya on the banks of the Godavari.

+++As Lord Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu was departing, Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya submitted the following at his lotus feet, <My Lord, you must fulfill this request of mine. In the town of Vidyanagara, on the bank of the Godavari, there is a responsible government officer named Ramananda Raya. Please do not neglect him, thinking he belongs to a sudra family engaged in materialistic activities. Please take my word for it that you should meet him without fail. If anyone is fit to associate with you, it is he. No other devotee can compare with him in knowledge of the divine sentiments. He has attained the highest limits of learning as well as being experienced in the science of devotional sentiments. If you converse with him, you will recognize his exalted character. When I first met him, I could not understand that everything he said and did were all transcendental. I made fun of him simply because he was a Vaishnava. By your mercy I can now understand the truth about Ramananda Raya. In talking with him, you also will acknowledge his greatness.> (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.7.61-67)

Srila Prabhupada Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati has commented as follows (2.7.63): <To superficial understanding, Ramananda Raya was not a sannyasi wearing a loincloth. In common understanding, those who are courtiers engaged in government service are materialistic, but Ramananda Raya was in fact a learned person who was a de facto sannyasi, as a perfected human being. Sarvabhauma

Bhattacharya had previously been able to recognize his natural qualities as a Vaishnava, even though he himself was not a Vaishnava at that time. When he took to devotional service by the grace of the Lord, he reconsidered his opinion of Ramananda and realized the extent of his qualifications, calling him an *adhikari rasika-bhakta* -- the most highly qualified authority in the matters of devotional sentiment.>

Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya was the incarnation of Br̥haspati and the court paṇḍita of King Prataparudra. He was so learned that even though a householder, he had sannyasis as his disciples. Nevertheless, he had been unable to recognize that Chaitanya Mahāprabhu was the Supreme Lord himself, nor was he able to identify Ramananda Raya as his most intimate associate. If he was unable to do so, then how much more difficult it would be for others! No one is able to understand the glories of the Lord and his devotees without being blessed by their mercy.

+++Mental speculation is of no value for understanding the nature of the Supreme Lord. Without the Lord's mercy, no person can come to know him. One to whom the Lord gives even a slight drop of mercy is able to understand his nature. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.6.82-3)

## **Mahāprabhu meets Ramananda**

Mahāprabhu set off to the south, blessing the inhabitants of the land by bestowing devotion to Krishna on them. He visited Kurma-sthana, delivering the Brahmin also named Kurma, and giving everyone the order to preach devotional service to Krishna. He saved Vasudeva Vipra and then went on the Simhacalam where he danced before the deity of Jiyā Nrisingha. Then he went on to the Godavari River, which in his vision was the Yamuna, and the woods on its banks, Vrindavan. He joyfully crossed the river and came to the place known as Kabhura, where he bathed in the river, hoping to meet Ramananda Raya. Coming out of the water, he sat down and waited for him.

At the same time, Ramananda Raya passed by with a fanfare. When he saw Mahāprabhu's supernatural form, he descended from his palanquin and paid his

obeisances to the Lord. Though Mahaprabhu recognized him, he asked him to identify himself. Ramananda replied that he was nothing but a lowly sudra servant. When the Lord heard him speak in this humble manner, he immediately embraced him. Both the Lord and his servant felt the onset of divine emotions and the both experienced the eight ecstatic transformations of prema. The Brahmins who were accompanying Ramananda were astonished to see such a display. They thought,

+++<This sannyasi is as effulgent as the brahmajyoti. Why is he crying while embracing this sudra? The governor Ramananda is a scholar and normally very serious. Why has become so emotional upon being touched by this sannyasi, as though intoxicated?> (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.8.26-7)

Seeing that there were outsiders present, the Lord controlled his emotions and told Ramananda that he had been told by Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya to seek him out. Ramananda replied with humility,

+++<This is the proof of your mercy to Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya: you have touched me, an untouchable, simply due to his love for you. What a difference exists between us -- you are the Supreme Lord, Narayan himself, and I, a government servant interested in materialistic activities. Indeed, I am the lowest amongst men of the fourth caste. Even so, you were not contemptuous of my touch, neither did you fear the Vedic injunctions which forbid one to even look upon a sudra. Your mercy makes you touch me, even though this activity is condemned by scripture and by society. Who can understand your intention, for you are the Supreme Lord himself.> (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.8.34-7)

Though the Brahmins had never shown the slightest interest in bhakti, they too were influenced by the sight of the Lord and began to chant the names of Krishna, their voices tremulous with divine ecstasy. Ramananda Raya said aloud that Mahaprabhu was the Supreme Lord, both in akṛti, or form, and in prakṛti, or nature. The Lord immediately responded in a way that would show the greatness of his devotee:

+++The Lord said, <You are a great devotee, indeed you are the best amongst them. All those who behold you are immediately affected so that their hearts melt. What to speak of others --- I am a mayavadi sannyasi, yet I feel the onset of Krishna prema when I touch you.> (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.8.44-5)



## The Lord listens to Ramananda speak

When Mahaprabhu told him of his desire to hear Krishna-katha from his lips, Ramananda suggested that he stay for a week or so at his house so that his own wicked mind could be pacified and purified. The two then each went their way to finish their duties, returning to the same spot in the evening. Ordinarily, it is seen that a devotee asks the questions and the Lord answers. This time, however, the roles were reversed and the Lord asked Ramananda to clarify certain spiritual truths and then empowered him to respond. Krishnadas Kaviraj Goswami makes this explicit in the verse which opens the eighth chapter of the Madhya-lila:

\*sancarya ramabhidha-bhakta-meghe

\*svabhakti-siddhanta-cayamṛtani |

\*gaurabdhir etair amuna vitirṇais

\*taj-jnatva-ratnalayataṁ prayati ||

+++Gauranga is like the ocean of spiritual truths;

+++he filled the cloud named Ramananda

+++with the nectar of the purest conclusions of devotion to himself.

+++Ramananda then rained down that same nectar

+++on the very ocean from which it had come,

+++producing the jewels of transcendental knowledge. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.8.1)

A person who has not taken shelter of the Lord may try to understand the Supreme Truth by using empirical means, without achieving any success. Indeed, he will fall into confusion and be unable to understand the words of the Lord.

Mahaprabhu asked Ramananda Raya to explain to him, with evidence from the scriptures, the ultimate goal of life. Ramananda started his response by explaining that devotion to Vishnu was the ultimate aim of human achievement, or sadhya. In this theistic conception, he described progressive path of different practices leading to that goal, starting from the practice of varṇasrama dharma, offering the fruits of one's activities to Krishna (karmarpaṇa), renunciation of prescribed duties (karma-tyaga) and devotion mixed with knowledge (jnana-misra-bhakti), offering the scriptural basis for each step. Mahaprabhu rejected each proposal, however, saying that it was superficial or external, for none of these practices were potential means for achieving the pure devotion which he had come to give.

By starting this conversation with Ramananda Raya with varṇasrama dharma, Mahaprabhu showed that all activities which ignore the Vedic principles or go against them are to be completely rejected. When responding to each of Ramananda's suggestings, Mahaprabhu did not say, <Absolutely not!>, he rather used the words, eho bahya, <This too is peripheral.> The idea is that one must first give up activities which are outside the scope of the Vedic standard. Once one is fixed in these principles, one can progressively gain the qualifications to proceed through each of the various steps described by Ramananda. This holds true even though bhakti itself is completely independent and may manifest in an individual through the association of saintly persons despite one's having no prior qualifications or having gone through these prior steps.

When Ramananda Raya finally answered Mahaprabhu's question by saying <Pure devotional service without any tinge of speculative knowledge (jnana-sunya-bhakti) is the means to achieve the supreme perfection.>, Mahaprabhu finally accepted his conclusion. From this point on, Mahaprabhu's teachings actually begin. The words jnana-sunya are meant to completely eradicate any consciousness of the impersonal aspect of the supreme, and not the kind of knowledge of relationships (sambandha-jnana) which is favorable to the attainment of pure devotional service.

Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur writes in his Amṛta-pravaha-bhaṣya, <The purport is that sacrificing the results of one's actions is better than merely engaging in one's prescribed duties according to the varṇasrama dharma; the renunciation of fruitive activities is better than simply giving up the fruits; better than this is the cultivation of knowledge mixed with devotional service. However, despite this progressive improvement in spirituality through these

stages, they are all superficial because these four kinds of practices have no power to achieve pure devotion, or suddha bhakti. The devotion known as aropa-siddha, by which is meant adding a devotional veneer as an afterthought, or saṅga-siddha, by which is meant devotion by associating a fruitive activity with some devotional act, are never to be considered pure devotional service. Pure devotional service is Svarupa-siddha bhakti, i.e., it is devotion both in form and in intent. It is entirely different from these other activities which have only a superficial relationship to devotional service. The characteristics of suddha bhakti are that it is activity executed uniquely for the pleasure of Krishna, devoid of any material desires, it is not hidden by the presence of fruitive intent or knowledge of brahman. This is the consciousness that is the ultimate goal of spiritual practice, for though it is practiced by an aspiring devotee, it is realized when he reaches perfection of his practice.> (2.8.68)

As long as Ramananda Raya suggested anything other than following in the footsteps of the great devotees and listening to Krishna-katha from his lips, Mahaprabhu kept saying, <This is irrelevant.> Therefore it is to be understood that pure devotion starts from the moment one begins to hear about the activities and teachings of Lord Krishna from the lips of a pure devotee. From this point, Ramananda Raya described the various stages of pure devotion, the moods of neutrality, servitude, friendship, parenthood and conjugal love. From there, he went on to describe Radha's love as being supreme as well as both Radha and Krishna's characteristics. Then Mahaprabhu asked questions like <What is the essence of education?>, <What kind of fame is best for the living being?>. All these things have been extensively described in the eighth chapter of Chaitanya Charitamrita's Madhya-lila. In order to avoid deviating too much from the account of Ramananda's life, we will not go into these matters any further here.

## **Ramananda's perception of the Lord's identity**

The identity of the Lord cannot remain hidden to his devotee. Ramananda was able to recognize the Lord for who he was. He said,

+++<First I saw you as an ordinary sannyasi. Now I see that you are actually a dark-skinned cowherd boy. I see a golden puppet standing in front of you; its

golden effulgence covers your entire body.> (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.8.268-9)

Mahaprabhu made an effort to dissimulate his identity when he heard this, saying that Raya Ramananda was a great devotee and thus saw Krishna everywhere. Ramananda, however, clearly stated the primary purpose of the Lord's incarnation. Mahaprabhu was pleased with his insightful realization and he displayed his form as the combination of rasa-raja (<the king of the devotional sentiments>) Krishna and the incarnation of maha-bhava (<the supreme devotional mood>), Srimati Radharani. When he saw this amazing combined form of the Lord, Ramananda Raya fell to the ground in a faint. When the Lord touched him, he regained consciousness.

They remained together for ten days, enjoying discussions of Krishna conscious topics. Before Mahaprabhu continued on his southern pilgrimage, he asked Ramananda to abandon his involvement with government service and join him in Puri when he returned.

When Mahaprabhu completed his sojourn in southern India, he met with Ramananda once again on the banks of the Godavari. He showed him the two books, Krishna-karṇamṛta and Brahma-saṁhita, which he had found in his travels, and which substantiated all that Ramananda Raya had said in their previous conversations. Ramananda Raya copied the two manuscripts himself. The Lord remained another week with Ramananda, enjoying the pleasure of discussions about Krishna before heading back to Nilachala. Ramananda refused to go with the Lord immediately as he was obliged to wait for the King's permission and also would need to take care of his personal affairs. He promised to join the Lord in Puri as soon as he was able.

## **Ramananda comes to Puri**

When the Lord arrived in Puri, he made his permanent residence in the house of Kashi Mishra. King Prataparudra had heard about the Lord and was very enthusiastic about meeting him. Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya had assured him that once the Lord had returned from his southern pilgrimage, he would somehow or other arrange for him to have darshan. Unfortunately, no matter how hard

Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya tried to convince him, the Lord insisted that he would not look upon a king. Thus all attempts to arrange a meeting met with failure.

When the King heard that Ramananda wished to return to Puri in order to be close to Mahaprabhu, he was quite happy to grant him permission. He allowed him to leave his duties in the government and continued to pay him a pension. Thus Ramananda first met with the King in Cuttack, and then in Puri, before going to Kashi Mishra's home to meet with the Lord himself. Ramananda knew just how eager the King was to encounter Mahaprabhu, but rather than bringing up the matter directly, he simply glorified the king, telling him Mahaprabhu much faith he had in him, how deep was his devotion to Krishna, and how kind he had been to free Ramananda from his governmental duties so that he could serve the Lord directly. By recounting the King's virtues in this way, he was able to melt the Lord's resolve.

In the meantime, Nityananda Prabhu had sent one of the Lord's loincloths to King Prataparudra as a consolation. Though this gave the King a great deal of joy, his desire to meet the Lord simply increased and he asked Ramananda to intercede on his behalf and make some kind of arrangement. When Ramananda finally approached the Lord directly, asking him to be compassionate toward the King, the Lord was not able to refuse him directly. He agreed that the King was no ordinary materialistic person, but nevertheless, the very title raja was a type of contamination that he could not overlook. So he agreed to allow the king's son to come and see him, as the son and father are, in a sense, one.

+++Mahaprabhu said, <There may be much milk in a big pot, but if it is contaminated by a drop of liquor, it is untouchable. The King certainly possesses all good qualities, but everything has been ruined simply by his possession of the kingly title. If you are still very eager for the King to meet with me, then you can bring his son in his place. The scripture states that one's self is reborn in the son, therefore if his son comes, it will be equal to his meeting with Me.> Ramananda Raya then went to inform the King about his talks with the Lord, and, according to his request, brought the King's son to see Him. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.12.53-7)

## **Appreciating Rupa's plays**

Rupa Manjari is the follower of the sakhis Lalita and Visakha, who are not different from Ramananda Raya. Rupa Goswami discussed the subject of his two plays, Lalita-madhava and Vidagdha-madhava with Ramananda. When Ramananda asked to hear a verse about the play's

\*anarpita-carim cirat karuṇayavatirṇaḥ kalau

\*samarpayitum unnatojjvala-rasaṁ sva-bhakti-sriyam |

\*hariḥ purāṭa-sundara-dyuti-kadamba-sandipitaḥ

\*sada hr̥daya-kandare sphuratu vaḥ sacinandanaḥ ||

+++The elevated, effulgent taste of sacred rapture

+++is the wealth of devotional love;

+++the Lord never gives it at any time;

+++yet, out of his mercy in this age of quarrel,

+++to distribute this treasure to the world,

+++he has become incarnate in his golden form.

+++The son of Sachi is like a lion;

+++may he dwell in the cave of your heart forever.

When Ramananda Raya heard this verse, he began to praise Rupa Goswami with what seemed like a thousand tongues. He said that Rupa could only have written such an accurate portrayal of such difficult concepts as a result of the Lord's mercy.

**Pradyumna Mishra meets Ramananda**

In order to reveal the extent of his transcendental character and identity, Mahaprabhu sent Pradyumna Mishra, who was born in an upper-class Brahmin family to Ramananda to be instructed, even though Ramananda was not of such high caste. Pradyumna Mishra was born in Sylhet, but later made his permanent home in Orissa. He came one day to Mahaprabhu asking to hear some Hari-katha. Mahaprabhu replied with great humility that he was not qualified to speak on elevated matters of sacred rapture, and sent him to meet Ramananda Raya.

At that time, Ramananda Raya was in the Jagannath-vallabha gardens, engaged in preparing two young deva-dasis for a play which was to be given before Lord Jagannath. Not only was he training them in the songs that they would sing and in the dance they would perform, but also bathing, dressing and decorating them. The first time that Pradyumna Mishra came to see Ramananda, one of Ramananda's servants told him that he was busy doing this work and asked Mishra to sit outside and wait. None of Ramananda Raya's servants dared to interrupt him while he was busy preparing the performance which was to be given before Lord Jagannath. Only after he had finished the rehearsal and come outside did he learn that Pradyumna Mishra had come there to hear about Krishna from him.

Ramananda showed the Brahmin the appropriate respect and begged forgiveness for the long delay. Mishra realized that it was too late that day for his wish to be fulfilled and he returned home. Some days later, when Mahaprabhu saw Mishra, he asked him how the meeting with Ramananda had gone and what topics they had discussed. Pradyumna Mishra told him everything that had happened and told the Lord that some doubts had risen in his mind about Ramananda's activities. The Lord immediately took steps to erase these doubts from the Brahmin's mind. He began to glorify Ramananda's extraordinary character with great force. He said:

+++<I am a sannyasi and I consider myself to be renounced. But if I even hear the name of a woman, what to speak of seeing one, I feel an effect on my mind and body. So who is not moved by the sight of a woman? Everyone listen to me. Let me tell you about Ramananda Raya, although they are so wonderful and uncommon that they really cannot be properly described. He personally serves Jagannath's young and beautiful devadasis in every possible way. He personally bathes and dresses them and decorates them with ornaments. While doing so, he

naturally sees and touches the private parts of their bodies, but even so, his mind is never affected. He teaches the girls how to physically express all the moods of love, to be acted out before Jagannath Deva, but his mind and body are as steady as wood or stone. Indeed, it is amazing that even when he touches such young girls, his mind is not disturbed. Only Ramananda has the right to do such things, and seeing him do them, I can understand that his body is not material but has been completely transformed into a spiritual entity.> (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.5.35-42)

Mahaprabhu thus revealed Ramananda's amazing powers to Pradyumna Mishra, and through him, to the world. He told Pradyumna that he himself went to Ramananda to hear about Krishna, and he advised him to go a second time. This time, Pradyumna was able to hear Ramananda speak about Krishna in such depth and with such insight that he was astonished, so astonished in fact, that he began to dance in ecstasy.

Bhaktivinoda Thakur has written the following comment on the above pastime: <Raya Ramananda had composed a play which is known as Jagannath-vallabha-nāṭaka. This play was performed in the Jagannath temple for the pleasure of Jagannath himself. The deva-dasis, or <virgins of the God>, were girls who were given to the deity as his wives and they were trained up in performing just for the deity. In Orissan, they are now called maharis. Ramananda engaged two of these girls to play in his drama, directing them in how to play the emotions appropriate to the gopis. Since the two deva-dasis were playing the roles of chief gopis, Ramananda made no distinction between them and Krishna's beloved mistresses. He considered himself to be their maidservant, and in that spiritual identity, engaged in their service by teaching them to dance and sing for their Lord. Because Ramananda Raya knew himself to be one of Srimati Radharani's handmaidens, he was able to project the identity of his worshipable mistress on the two deva-dasis and this is why he was able to serve them in this most intimate fashion without experiencing the disturbance of mundane sexual desire.> (Amṛta-pravaha-bhaṣya, 3.5.20)

+++Though a householder, Ramananda is not under the control of the six deadly sins (lust, anger, greed, illusion, intoxication and envy). Though a so-called materialistic person, he is qualified to instruct those in the renounced order of life. The Lord wished to reveal these qualities of Ramananda, and so he sent Pradyumna Mishra to listen to him speak about Krishna. The Lord knows very well how to make his devotees virtues public. He considers it to be to his



personal profit to do so by using various stratagems. O devotees, listen carefully to yet another of the Lord's characteristics: he manifests his own majestic nature, though these are usually hidden. He spreads real religious principles through a man from a lowly sudra in order to vanquish the false pride of so-called renunciants and learned scholars. He preached about devotional service, ecstatic love and the Absolute Truth by making Ramananda Raya, a gr̥hastha born in a low family, the speaker, while he himself, an exalted Brahmin-sannyasi, and Pradyumna Mishra, a pure Brahmin, both listened and took lessons from him. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.5.80-85)

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur comments on these words from the Chaitanya Charitamrita as follows: <To materialistic vision, Ramananda Raya is a gr̥hastha on the pravṛtti-marga, engaged in an active life in the world. He is not, it is clear, a self-controlled brahmachari, vanaprastha, or sannyasi. A materialistic householder is under the control of his senses and this is the basis of his involvement in worldly activities. A Vaishnava householder who has attained the transcendental state, however, is not at all on the same level, transcending the influences of the six deadly sins and standing aloof from the influence of the senses. Ramananda Raya accepted the householder state as his role in the pastimes of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. Ordinary materialistic persons look upon him through glass that is tinted by their own desire for sense gratification and see him as one of their own, but in fact his mind had been totally spiritualized through being fixed on the supreme worshipable object. He was thus a Krishna-viṣayi, one who seeks only the pleasure of Krishna's senses and not his own. He was not an impersonalist or argumentative nihilist opposed to the Lord's transcendental activities. Indeed, he possessed the power to transform the minds of such sannyasis who had abandoned sense gratification and were absorbed in the qualityless brahman without any appreciation for Krishna's form and pastimes, and turn them away from their fundamentally materialistic conception of transcendence, attracting them to the practice of devotional service through hearing and chanting about Krishna's name, form and activities.>

## **Other activities in Puri**

When Vallabha Bhatta came to Puri and came into contact with Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, the Lord kept his own glories hidden from him because he knew him to be proud of his learning. He thus preferred to speak to Vallabha Bhatta about the qualifications of his entourage. At that time he said of Ramananda that he was expert both in the sambandha, or knowledge of the relationships between God, man and the universe, and the prayojana-tattva, or knowledge of life in the state of divine perfection. Furthermore, he indicated that he was the greatest connoisseur of the pure and sacred raptures of Vrindavan.

+++Ramananda Raya is the treasure house of divine sentiments. It was he who disclosed to me that Krishna is the Supreme Personality of Godhead. No one can fully describe the extent of Ramananda's spiritual power. Through him I was able to learn about the pure moods of the devotees of Vraja. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.7.23, 37)

+++Ramananda Raya had the same type of relationship with Mahaprabhu that Subala, Krishna's friend and helper used to have in Vraja. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.6.9)

Ramananda Raya was also present in Nilachala when Hari Das Thakur passed away. Mahaprabhu praised Hari Das before the devotees led by Ramananda and Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya. (3.11.50)

## **Ramananda in the Lord's last days**

When the Lord was in his condition of divine ecstatic madness, he would sometimes disappear from his chambers, even though there were three barred doors through which he had to pass in order to go outside. Once he was found near the Lion's Gate, his joints loosened and taking on a giant, distended form. He was revived and returned to normal by loud singing of the Holy Names. On another occasion, he was found in the sand dunes which he had taken in his

state of trance to be Govardhana. Once again, he was pacified by sankirtan and returned to his home. On these occasions, Ramananda Raya was present with Svarupa Damodar. Throughout the ten transformations of the Lord's ecstatic madness (divyonmada), Ramananda Raya would recite verses which were fit the Lord's emotional state. In this way, he brought pleasure to the Lord.

+++Mahaprabhu remained in Nilachala in this way, passing the days and nights absorbed in the anxiety of separation from Krishna. Svarupa and Ramananda were always with him, bringing him ecstasy with their recitation of songs and verses appropriate to his mood. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.20.3-4)

+++... the Lord took Svarupa Damodar and Ramananda Raya by the shoulders and said, <Listen, Svarupa and Rama Raya! Tell me what I should do, where should I go in order to find Krishna. You can tell me the best thing to do.> In this way, Gauranga would tell his tale of woe to Svarupa and Ramananda and they would console him in his grief. Svarupa would sing and Ramananda would recite Sanskrit verses, giving joy to the Lord with verses from Krishna Karṇamṛta, the songs of Vidyapati and Gita-Govinda. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.15.24-7)

+++Remaining in the company of Svarupa and Ramananda both day and night, Mahaprabhu ecstatically relished the songs of Chandi Das, Vidyapati and Ramananda Raya's plays, as well as Krishna-Karṇamṛta and Gita-Govinda. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.2.77)

Ramananda Raya performed his bhajana in the Jagannath-vallabha gardens, a place which was very dear to Mahaprabhu also. As soon as the Lord entered within this garden, he would be overwhelmed by feelings of divine love. One day, while the Lord was there, he had a vision of Krishna under an asoka tree. Then, the vision was suddenly lost to him, and Mahaprabhu fell to the ground in a faint.

+++The main park in Puri is the Jagannath-vallabha garden. The Lord entered there with his devotees. The trees and flower bushes were in bloom, and it seemed as though it was Vrindavan. The parrots, mynah birds, and cuckoos were singing their songs and the bees were all buzzing. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.19.79-80)

+++Wandering through the garden, he went from tree to tree. When he came to

an asoka tree, he suddenly saw Krishna standing there. The Lord started to run towards him, but Krishna laughed at him and disappeared. The Lord was stunned: he had found Krishna and then had lost him again. He lost consciousness and fell to the ground. (Chaitanya Charitamrita Antya 19.85-87)

Through Ramananda Raya and Sri Svarupa Damodar Goswami, Lord Chaitanya Mahaprabhu joyfully announced to the world that Harinama-sankirtan is the best means to attain love of God in this age of quarrel.

+++The Lord, in a wave of jubilation say, <Listen Svarupa Damodar and Ramananda Raya! In the age of Kali, Harinama sankirtan is the supreme means of deliverance. In the age of Kali, Krishna is to be worshiped by the congregational chanting of his Holy Names. This is the way that an intelligent person attains the lotus feet of Krishna. Through the chanting of the Holy Name, all of one's sinful reactions are extinguished and all auspiciousness arises until finally one experiences the joys of love for Krishna.> (Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.20.8-11)

There are two opinions about Ramananda Raya's disappearance day: some people say Jyestha Krishna-pancami, others Vaisakhi Krishna-pancami.

## **Sri Paramananda Puri**

\*puri paramanando ya asid uddhavaḥ pura |

+++He who was Uddhava in Krishna-lila came to enrich the pastimes of Gaura as Paramananda Puri. (Gaura-gaṇoddesa-dipika 118)

Nothing is known about Paramananda Puri's antecedents nor about his appearance and disappearance dates. It is known that he was born in Tirhut, the area which surrounds Muzaffarpur and Darbhanga in Bihar. Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur has described him as a Brahmin from Tirhut.

His diksha guru was Madhavendra Puri, as a result of which he was treated as a very dear superior by Mahaprabhu. Krishnadas Kaviraj Goswami has described Paramananda Puri as one of the nine sannyasi roots which came out of the trunk of the desire tree of devotion (Chaitanya Charitamrita 1.9.14). The first sprout of this desire tree was Madhavendra Puri; its well-nourished second sprout was Ishvara Puri; its trunk was Chaitanya Mahaprabhu himself. The entire tree remained stable sitting on nine sannyasi roots: Paramananda Puri, Keshava Bharati, Brahmananda Puri, Brahmananda Bharati, Vishnu Puri, Keshava Puri, Kṛṣṇananda Puri, Nrisingha Tirtha and Sukhananda Puri. Of these nine, Paramananda Puri is the central root. The great mystery here is that Chaitanya Mahaprabhu could both be the trunk of the tree and the gardener who takes care of it.

+++The central root of the tree was the grave and sober Paramananda Puri. The tree stood solidly on these nine roots. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 1.9.16)

### **Mahaprabhu's meeting with Paramananda Puri**

When Mahaprabhu left Nilachala to do a tirtha-yatra of Southern India in the company of Krishna Das Vipra, he travelled through Kurmasthana, Jiyāḍa-Nrisingha, Vidyanagara where he met with Raya Ramananda, Gautami Ganga, Mallikarjuna, Ahobala Nrisingha, Siddhabāṭa, Skandhakṣetra, Trimāṭha, Vṛddhakasi, Bauddhasthana, Tirupati, Trimalla, Pana Nrisingha, Shiva Kanci, Vishnu Kanci, Trikalahasti, Vṛddhakola, Siyali Bhairavi, the banks of the Kaveri River, Kumbhakarṇa's forehead, Sriraṅgam (where he bestowed bhakti on Vyeṅkaṭa Bhatta and his entire family).

When he arrived at Rṣabha Mountain he met Paramananda Puri for the first time. Rṣabha Parvata is in the state of Tamil Nadu in Madurai district. Twelve miles north of the town of Madurai are the Anagaḍamalaya mountains where Rṣabhadeva was burned in a forest fire in the forest surrounding Kuṭakacalam. The place is known today as Palni Hill, or Varaha Parvata, according to the local people. Paramananda Puri was observing the Caturmasya-vrata at this Rṣabha Parvata when Mahaprabhu arrived there. The Lord paid his obeisances to Paramananda, who stood up and embraced him. The two of them spent three

days discussing topics of Krishna. When Puri told the Lord of his intention to travel north to Puri and then continue on to bathe in the Ganges, Mahaprabhu invited him to return to Puri afterwards and join him. He said that he himself would quickly return from Setubandha to Puri where they would meet again.

+++Puri Goswami said, <I intend to go to Puri. After visiting Puri, I will go on from there to Bengal where I will bathe in the Ganges.> The Lord said, <Come back again to Puri afterward. I will be there before long after I have visited Setubandha. It is my wish to stay with you, so please be kind to me and come and take up permanent residence in Puri.> (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.9.171-3)

### **Paramananda goes to Puri**

When Mahaprabhu returned from his southern tour to Nilachala, he sent Kalakṛṣṇa Das to Nabadwip to announce to Sachi and the other devotees that he had returned. They were all overjoyed by the news, and then Advaita Acharya and the others took Sachi's permission to visit the Lord in Puri. Paramananda Puri happened to be in Nabadwip at the time, as he had been walking along the Ganges. He had been staying in Mayapur at Sachi Mata's house where she had been taking care of him with great affectionately. He thus also learned from Kalakṛṣṇa Das that Mahaprabhu had returned to Nilachala. Feeling an intense eagerness to see the Lord again, he and another devotee, Kamala Kanta Dvija, immediately left for Puri.

Once again, Mahaprabhu respectfully paid obeisances to Paramananda Puri, while he was overwhelmed with feelings of ecstasy and took the Lord in his arms. They each told the other how much they desired their association.

The Lord said, I desire very much to remain in your company. I request you to be merciful to me and take up residence in Nilachala. Puri answered, And I too am very eager to remain in your company. It is for that reason that I left Bengal to come here to Nilachala. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.10.17-8)

Mahaprabhu gave a secluded room in Kashi Mishra's house to Paramananda Puri as living quarters. Paramananda Puri was therefore always present during the Caturmasya period, participating in all of the Lord's pastimes during that time along with his others associates.

We can see from Vrindavan Das's Chaitanya Bhagavat just how dear Paramananda Puri was to Mahaprabhu:

+++Mahaprabhu saw Paramananda Puri from a distance and he immediately got up respectfully. Joyful to see his devotee, the Lord glorified him and danced in ecstatic love. Lifting his arms, he cried out <Hari! Hari! I have finally seen Paramananda Puri with my own eyes! My eyes have been fulfilled, my life has finally been perfected! All my religious works have finally borne fruit. My sannyas has been fulfilled. It is as though I am seeing Madhavendra Puri himself.> Having said this, the Lord took his dear devotee to his chest and bathed his body with the tears from his lotus eyes. Puri also forgot himself in ecstasy as soon as he saw the Lord's moonlike face. For some time the two paid obeisances to each other. Paramananda Puri is the abode of love for Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. <Chaitanya Bhagavat 3.3.168-175)

+++Only Svarupa Damodar was as dear to the Lord as Puri Goswami. Amongst all the sannyasis, there was no one as dear to the Lord as Puri Goswami. Svarupa Damodar and Paramananda Puri are the most qualified of the sannyasi associates of the Lord. The two of them remained constantly in the Lord's company, taking the staff (daṇḍa) in renunciation for the Lord. Puri engaged primarily in meditation, while Svarupa Damodar engaged in kirtan. They were like two arms of the Lord's form as a sannyasi. (Chaitanya Bhagavat 3.10.42, 46-49)

### **Paramananda's activities with the Lord in Puri**

Mahaprabhu ostracized Choṭa Hari Das for having talked to a woman, refusing him entrance to his house. Choṭa Hari Das was greatly distressed by this punishment and fasted for three days. Svarupa Damodar and the rest of Mahaprabhu's entourage repeatedly asked the Lord to soften his stance toward Hari Das, but he would not be shaken. Indeed, he rebuked the devotees for

suggesting that he repeal his order. When the devotees learned that Choṭa Hari Das intended to commit suicide because he was no longer allowed to see the Lord, they came to Paramananda Puri as a last resort to ask the Lord to forgive him. The Lord considered Paramananda Puri to be as worshipable as his own guru, as he was Isvara Puri's godbrother. The devotees hoped that if he were to approach the Lord on behalf of Choṭa Hari Das, that the Lord would accept his demand.

When Paramananda came to Mahaprabhu, the Lord said that he was willing to allow Choṭa Hari Das to return to his house, but that he himself would go to Alalanath. Paramananda Puri was taken off guard by Mahaprabhu's intention to leave Puri. He said that he was the independent Lord and that it had been incorrect of him to try to interfere with his decision. He then tried to dissuade Mahaprabhu from going to Alalanath.

Mahaprabhu taught by his own behavior that the guru's godbrother is worshipable, like the guru. It is extremely detrimental to one's devotional life to disrespect those who are one's guru-varga. The Lord says, <I cannot tolerate breaches of Vaishnava etiquette.> (Chaitanya Charitamrita 1.4.166)

Paramananda Puri participated in nearly all of the Lord's pastimes in Purushottam: the cleaning of the Gundicha temple, the Rathayatra festival, the water sports in the Narendra Sarovara. He was present at the festival in honor of Hari Das Thakur after his disappearance. Once the Bengali devotees returned home after the rainy season, Saravabhauma Bhaṭṭācārya invited either Mahaprabhu or one of his ten sannyasi associates (Paramananda Puri, Damodar Svarupa, Brahmananda Puri, Brahmananda Bharati, Vishnu Puri, Keshava Puri, Kṛṣṇananda Puri, Nrisingha Tirtha, Sukhananda Puri, and Satyananda Bharati) to take lunch at his house every day for a month. Five of these days were consecrated to nicely feeding Paramananda Puri with delicious mahaprasada.

All the Gaudiya Vaishnavas and the residents of Puri treated Paramananda Puri as a senior spiritual leader and gave him all respect. Mahaprabhu himself followed the etiquette of placing sandalwood paste and giving garlands to Paramananda Puri and Brahmananda Bharati before anyone else during the Rathayatra festival. During the Gundicha temple cleaning, he did not engage his guru-varga in any of the difficult tasks like carrying buckets of water. Rather, they were engaged in cleaning alongside the Lord with the water the other devotees had carried in.



+++Paramananda Puri and Brahmananda Bharati were overjoyed to receive the sandalwood paste from Mahaprabhu's own hand. Advaita Acharya and Nityananda Prabhu were also ecstatic to receive the touch of the Lord's hand. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.13.30-1)

+++Except for Nityananda, Advaita, Svarupa, Brahmananda and Paramananda Puri, all the other devotees carried water. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.12.109)

### **Paramananda Puri's well**

The Vyasadeva of Lord Chaitanya's pastimes, Vrindavan Das Thakur describes Paramananda Puri's glories in the Chaitanya Bhagavat (Antyakhaṇḍa, chapter 3), especially mentioning his well. Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur makes the following remarks about Paramananda Puri's well in his Bhaṣya on the Chaitanya Bhagavat: <This well is not far along the road leading west from the Jagannath temple. Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur pointed this well out as being that of Paramananda Puri. It is just next to the police station.>

Just as Krishna engaged in intimate conversation and discussions with his friend Arjuna, so too did Mahaprabhu spend entire days conversing with Paramananda Puri about Krishna. Mahaprabhu knew that the water from this well was not good through his omniscience; later he heard the same thing directly from Paramananda himself. Jagannath knew that any living being who touched or drank the water from Paramananda's well would be freed from all his sins and thus liberated, thus he himself had made the water of this well muddy in order to discourage anyone from taking it. This was a sign of Jagannath's miserliness, as he did not seem to want anyone to have this opportunity to attain liberation. Mahaprabhu thus stood up and prayed with arms upraised, asking Lord Jagannath to be merciful to the jivas.

+++Lord Jagannath, grant me this boon: Let the Ganges river enter into this well. Please order the Bhogavati Ganga, which travels underground, to flow into the well. (Chaitanya Bhagavat 3.3.235-6)

When the devotees heard the Lord's sweet prayer, they all shouted the names of

Hari in approval. Taking the order of the Lord seriously, Ganga Devi entered into the well. The next morning, the devotees were amazed and overjoyed to see that the water in the well was pure and clear. Paramananda Puri glorified the well, saying that anyone who takes a bath with this water will obtain the same benefits as from bathing in the Ganges and would attain devotion to Krishna.

Mahaprabhu himself bathed in the well's water and drank from it. Just as the devotee glorifies the Lord, so too does the Lord sing his devotee's glories and seeks to increase them. Those who are uninterested in the Supreme Lord are incapable of understanding the glories of a devotee. The compassionate Lord glorifies the devotees so that everyone could learn that without the association of devotees and without their mercy, there is no such thing as auspiciousness for the jiva.

+++The Lord said, <I am present on this earth only out of affection for Paramananda Puri. I belong to him alone. If he sells me, I allow myself to be sold. Anyone who sees Paramananda Puri, even once, will receive love for Krishna. (Chaitanya Bhagavat 3.3.255-7)

In the Gauḍiṇya Vaiṣṇava Abhidhana, it is said that Paramananda Puri wrote a book named Govinda-vijaya.

## **Sri Svarupa Damodar**

+++The Lord accepted Sikhi Mahiti's sister as one of Radha's friends. In the entire world, there were only three and a half devotees who were so worthy. They were Svarupa Damodar Goswami, Ramananda Raya and Sikhi Mahiti. His sister was the half person. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.2.105-6)

## **Mahaprabhu's alter ego**

Sri Svarupa Damodar Goswami was one of Mahaprabhu's three and a half most intimate associates. Elsewhere Krishnadas Kaviraj Goswami has called him the most important of the Lord's companions. <Two persons knew the Lord best: Paramananda Puri and Svarupa Damodar.> (Chaitanya Charitamrita 1.10.124-5)

+++I have already shown that preaching the sankirtan movement was the external cause for the Lord's descent. There is another, primary purpose for the Lord's incarnation. This is the personal work of Krishna, the foremost enjoyer of loving exchanges. This very confidential cause is three-fold, as has been revealed by Svarupa Damodar Goswami. Sri Svarupa Damodar Goswami was extremely close to the Lord and thus was able to know all these matters. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 1.4.103-5)

In his lila as the golden avatar, Mahaprabhu is Krishna himself enveloped by the desire and bodily luster of Srimati Radharani. Sri Svarupa Damodar Goswami was his alter ego. Because of his intimate connection to the Lord, he was able to know all the most confidential reasons for his incarnation as well as the most secret aspects of his lila. He later divulged these understandings to a larger audience of devotees. In Vraja-lila, he was also Radharani's alter-ego, Lalita Sakhi. In the Gaura-gaṇoddesa-dipika, Kavi Karṇapura identifies Sri Svarupa Damodar Goswami as Radha's other companion, Visakha Devi.

\*kalam asikṣayad radham ya visakha vraje pura |

\*sadya Svarupa-gosvami tat-tad-bhava-vilasavan ||

+++That same Visakha who previously taught Radha the arts in Vraja is today Svarupa Goswami, who rejoices in the moods of Radha and Krishna.

In the last twelve years of his pastimes in Puri, the Lord remained constantly absorbed in the mood of Radharani. During this time, only Svarupa Damodar and Ramananda Raya were able to experience the depths of his emotion through relishing topics known only to them.

\*candidasa vidyapati rayera nāṭaka giti

\*karṇamṛta sri gita-govinda |

\*svarupa ramananda sane mahaprabhu ratri-dine

\*gaya, sune parama ananda ||

+++Day and night, Mahaprabhu ecstatically relished the songs of Chandi Das, Vidyapati and Ramananda Raya's plays, as well as Krishna-Karṇamṛta and Gita-Govinda in the company of Svarupa and Ramananda. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.2.77)

+++Paramananda Puri had parental affection for Mahaprabhu; Ramananda Raya had love for him in pure friendship; Govinda Das's love for him was as a servant. Gadadhara, Jagadananda and Svarupa Damodar worshiped him in the ecstasy of the chief rasa. Mahaprabhu heart was won by these four different loving attitudes. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.2.78)

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur has explained these verses in his Anubhaṣya as follows: <Sri Paramananda Puri, who was Uddhava in Krishna-lila, loved Mahaprabhu with parental affection; Ramananda, who was either Visakha or Arjuna, had the pure sentiment of a close friend; Govinda and others were devoted to their service to the Lord, and possessed a pure mood of service (suddha-dasya). Gadadhara, Jagadananda and Svarupa Damodar served the Lord in the primary sentiment, i.e., that of erotic love (madhura-rasa). The Lord became obliged to these devotees, accepting their worship, their association, their service and their joy.>

### **Svarupa Damodar's karāca**

+++Murari Gupta explained all of the Lord's early pastimes in the form of an outline. Svarupa Damodar did the same for the Lord's later pastimes. The devotees describe the Lord's activities by following the order given in these two outlines. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 1.13.15-17)

Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur has written his commentary on these verses: <Murari Gupta's outline of the Lord's early pastimes are still extant, so devotees were able to expand on the Lord's pastimes after looking at his written text. The

Vaishnavas only heard Svarupa Damodar's kaṛaca through Raghunath Das Goswami.>

+++Chaitanya-lila is like the finest of jewels which were held in Sri Svarupa Damodar Goswami's storehouse and then placed by him around Raghunath Das's neck. I have written down here whatever I heard from him as extensively as I was able, making a gift of it to the devotees. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.2.85)

Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur comments on this verse in his Amṛta-pravaha-bhaṣya as follows: <Svarupa Damodar described the Lord's latter pastimes in summary Sanskrit verses known as a kaṛaca. He made Raghunath Das memorize these verses, and later Krishnadas Kaviraj Goswami spread these accounts of the Lord's activities throughout the world. As a result, Svarupa Damodar's kaṛaca was never published in book form. The Chaitanya Charitamrita is itself the essence of Sri Svarupa Damodar Goswami's kaṛaca.>

### **Svarupa Damodar's kirtan**

+++ Sri Svarupa Damodar used to used to make Mahaprabhu very happy by singing the songs of Vidyapati, Chandi Das and Gita-govinda. He was as expert a musician as the Gandharvas, and in knowledge of the scripture he was just like Bṛhaspati. No personality was his equal. Sri Svarupa Damodar was also very dear to Advaita acharya and Nityananda Prabhu, and he was the life and soul of all the devotees, headed by Srivasa Thakur. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.10.115-7)

Krishnadas Kaviraj Goswami has described the extent to which Sri Svarupa Damodar Goswami and Ramananda Raya were dear to Mahaprabhu in the 15th chapter of the Antya-lila:

+++After saying these things, the Lord took Svarupa Damodar and Ramananda Raya by the shoulders and said, <Listen, Svarupa and Rama Raya! Tell me what I should do, where should I go in order to find Krishna. You can tell me the best thing to do.> In this way, Gauranga would tell his tale of woe to Svarupa and Ramananda and they would console him in his grief. Svarupa would sing and Ramananda would recite Sanskrit verses, giving joy to the Lord with Kaṇamṛta,

Vidyapati and Gita-Govinda. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.15.24-7)

A similar passage is found in the 20th chapter of the Antya-lila.

+++Mahaprabhu remained in Nilachala in this way, passing the days and nights absorbed in the anxiety of separation from Krishna. Svarupa and Ramananda were always with him, bringing him ecstasy with their recitation of songs and verses appropriate to his mood. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.20.3-4)

Vrindavan Das Thakur has also named Sri Svarupa Damodar Goswami as one of Mahaprabhu's principal associates in his Chaitanya Bhagavat. He describes there how the Lord would lose external consciousness when hearing Svarupa's kirtan:

+++Whenever Svarupa Damodar would sing aloud, the Lord would lose all awareness of his surroundings and fall to the ground. Of all the sannyasis who were members of the Lord's entourage, none was the equal of Sri Svarupa Damodar Goswami. The Lord had a great deal of affection for Paramananda Puri, and an equal amount for Svarupa Damodar. Svarupa Damodar was full of the nectar of devotional songs, which would make the Lord dance as soon as he heard them. (Chaitanya Bhagavat 3.10.40-3)

When Srila Gadadhara Pandit Goswami was living at Ṭoṭa Gopinath's temple, he would give discourses on the Bhagavat while in an ecstatic trance. He primarily spoke on the sections dealing with the lives of Prahlad and Dhruva. Mahaprabhu was overcome by the eight ecstatic symptoms upon hearing Gadadhara's Bhagavat readings and Svarupa Damodar's kirtan.

+++Gadadhar Pandit was the main expert in the Bhagavat and Svarupa Damodar in kirtan. Svarupa Damodar would sing alone and Mahaprabhu would lose himself in dance. Mahaprabhu would reveal all the symptoms of ecstatic love such as tears, trembling, laughing, fainting, horripilation and roaring. They all manifested on his body as he danced with the devotees. When he heard Svarupa Damodar singing the kirtan aloud, the Lord would lose external consciousness and would fall down on the spot. There was no equal to Svarupa amongst all of the Lord's sannyasi associates. Svarupa was as dear to him as Paramananda Puri. Sri Svarupa Damodar Goswami was the incarnation of the delight of song, which would make Mahaprabhu dance. (Chaitanya Bhagavat 3.10.36-43)

## Early life and sannyas

We have the following information about Sri Svarupa Damodar Goswami in terms of his bodily identity. Before taking sannyas, he was known as Purushottam Acharya or Purushottam Bhattacharya. Gauḍiṇya Vaiṣṇava Abhidhana gives the following account of his antecedents: His father's name was Padmagarbha Acharya, the son of Jayarama Chakravarti. His residence was in the village of Bhiṭadiya on the banks of the Brahmaputra River in Bangla Desh. Jayarama Chakravarti made his home in Nabadwip. After his marriage to Jayarama's daughter, Padmagarbha also came to live there. At the birth of Purushottam, Padmagarbha left his wife and child at his father-in-law's house and left for Mithila and Kashi in order to study the scriptures. Thus Purushottam Acharya was raised in his maternal grandparents' home in Nabadwip.

Later, when Mahaprabhu took sannyas, he was unable to remain in Nabadwip due to the feelings of separation from the Lord and he departed for Benares where he also took the renounced order of life. This is described as follows in the Prema-vilasa:

+++Purushottam became a resident of Nabadwip, staying with his mother's parents. Filled with all virtues, he became Mahaprabhu's dear devotee. When the Lord took sannyas, he went mad with separation and left for Benares where he also took sannyas. Svarupa Damodar was given to him as his sannyas name. He was an intimate devotee of the Lord, an ocean of rasa.

Krishnadas Kaviraj Goswami has also pointed out some of the special characteristics of Sri Svarupa Damodar Goswami's sannyas:

+++On another day, Svarupa Damodar arrived; he was a very intimate friend of the Lord and an ocean of transcendental mellows. Before taking sannyas, he had resided at Nabadwip in Mahaprabhu's association and was known as Purushottam Acharya. When he saw Mahaprabhu accept the renounced order, he became like a madman and immediately went to Varanasi to take sannyas. His sannyas guru, Caitanyananda Bharati, ordered him to study the Vedanta-sutra and to teach it to others. Svarupa Damodar was a great renunciate as well as a

great learned scholar. With heart and soul he took shelter of Krishna's pastimes.

Due to his enthusiasm to worship Sri Krishna without any disturbance, he accepted the sannyas order almost in madness. When taking sannyas, Purushottam Acharya followed the regulative principles by giving up his tuft of hair and sacred thread, but he did not accept the saffron-colored dress. Nor did he take a sannyasi title but rather kept the brahmachari name Svarupa.

+++ Svarupa Damodar then took permission from his sannyas-guru and went to Nilachala where day and night he enjoyed the ecstasies of love for Krishna. Though he had attained the peak of learning, he spoke to no one but remained incognito and in seclusion.

(Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.10.102-114)

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur has made the following comments on this section of the Chaitanya Charitamrita: <In the Dasanami sect founded by Sankaracharya, the lines which take the sannyas names of Tirtha and Asrama follow the custom of giving the title Brahmachari to anyone who desires to be initiated in the renounced order. The aspirant is then required to vow to remain celibate for the rest of his life. He is also given a brahmachari title, which in Purushottam Acharya's case was Svarupa Da modara. Upon taking the saffron cloth known as yoga-paṭṭa, any brahmachari who has the title Svarupa takes the sannyas name of Tirtha.> (Anubhaṣya, 2.10.102)

<In the Dasanami sect, certain regulative principles must be followed before taking sannyas: one must perform eight kinds of sraddha, offering oblations to one's forefathers, the Viraja sacrifice. Then one cuts off the tuft of hair called a sikha and gives up the sacred thread. Svarupa Damodar accepted these preliminary processes in the acceptance of sannyas, but not accept the gurvahvana, or <<call of the guru>>, saffron cloth, a sannyas title or a daṇḍa, and for this reason he retained his brahmachari name.>

It may be pointed out here that for those who follow the formalities of tridaṇḍi sannyas, the keeping of the sikha, the sacred thread and saffron cloth are approved by the Skanda Puraṇa, which states:

\*sikhi yajnopaviti syat tridaṇḍi sa-kamaṇḍaluḥ |

\*sa pavitras ca kaṣayi gayatrim ca japet sada ||



+++Wearing the sikha, sacred thread and saffron cloth and carrying the kamaṇḍalu water pot, a tridaṇḍi sannyasi should constantly chant the gayatri mantra while remaining pure in his habits.

Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur has also commented in his Amṛta-pravaha-bhaṣya: <Purushottam Acharya took Mahaprabhu's example and took sannyas simply by renouncing his sikha and sutra. His sannyas name was Svarupa Damodar. He did not accept the formality of the yoga-paṭṭa because he wished to avoid any danger of becoming falsely proud of his status which would come with taking sannyas. He only wished to worship Krishna without any worries.> (to 2.10.108)

In the Anubhaṣya commentary to Adi-lila (4.105) of Chaitanya Charitamrita, Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur writes, <Purushottam Bhattacharya was a resident of Nabadwip. Even prior to Mahaprabhu's taking sannyas, he desired to renounce the world. He left home and went to Benares, where he accepted the position of brahmacarya in a group of Dasanami sannyasis. When he became a brahmachari, he was given the name Damodar Svarupa. He did not bother completing the sannyas rituals and came to Nilachala, Jagannath Puri, where spent the rest of his life at the Lord's lotus feet. He became Mahaprabhu's constant companion, enhancing the Lord's pleasure by singing the songs requested by the Lord. Svarupa Damodar could understand Mahaprabhu's secret mission and it was by his grace alone that all the Lord's devotees could know his deepest purpose.>

## **Svarupa arrives in Puri**

Mahaprabhu took sannyas on the full moon day of the month of Magh and left for Nilachala in the following month of Phalguna. After delivering Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya, he left for his pilgrimage to South India in the month of Vaishakh. Nityananda Prabhu gave him a Brahmin named Kala Krishna Das as his servant to accompany him on this trip. When Mahaprabhu returned from this journey, after having brought good fortune to the inhabitants of the South by bringing them Krishna-prema, Nityananda sent Krishna Das back to Nabadwip to inform the devotees that the Lord had arrived in Puri. The news brought great joy to Sachi Mata, Advaita Acharya, Srivasa Pandit and the other devotees. They

immediately started making preparations to visit the Lord in Puri. Paramananda Puri had been staying at Sachi Mata's house and he decided to leave ahead of the others with a Brahmin named Kamala Kanta. They were thus the first to come from Bengal to meet the Lord. Not long afterward, Purushottam Acharya, who had already been to Benares and taken sannyas from Caitanyananda Bharati and received the name Svarupa Damodar, arrived and joyously entered the Lord's entourage. When he first saw the Lord, Sri Svarupa Damodar Goswami recited the following prayer:

\*heloddhulita-khedaya visadaya pronmilad-amodaya

\*samyac-chastra-vivadaya rasa-daya cittarpitonmadaya |

\*sasvad-bhakti-vinodaya sa-madaya madhurya-maryadaya

\*sri-caitanya daya-nidhe tava daya bhuyad amandodaya ||

+++O ocean of mercy, Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu!

+++May your auspicious mercy arise like the dawn

+++driving away all kinds of material lamentation,

+++making everything pure and awakening transcendental bliss,

+++ending all quarrels and disagreements among different scriptures,

+++giving the taste of spiritual life

+++and maddening the minds of those surrendered to you,

+++constantly giving the intoxicating joy of devotional service,

+++and revealing the extent of the conjugal mood's sweetness.

(Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.10.119, Chaitanya-candrodaya ṇ+āṭaka 10.8)

Sri Svarupa Damodar Goswami first received the mercy of the Lord in the form of a heartfelt embrace. Then he paid his obeisances to Nityananda Prabhu and Paramananda Puri and then was introduced to Jagadananda and the other devotees. He first met Raya Ramananda when the latter came to Puri with King

Prataparudra and met Mahaprabhu there for the first time with the intention of persuading the Lord to meet with the king.

## **Friendship with Pundarika Vidyanidhi**

In Puri, Sri Svarupa Damodar Goswami participated in the water sports in Narendra Sarovara at the time of the Candana yatra and in the Indradyumna Sarovara after the cleaning of the Gundicha temple. He and Pundarika Vidyanidhi enjoyed splashing each other.

+++The two friends, Vidyanidhi and Svarupa Damodar, joyously splashed each other and laughed. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.8.124)

Jagannath has an annual festival in Puri named Oṛana Ṣaṣṭhi. On this occasion, Jagannath's pujaris dress the deity in cloth which still has the tapioca-based starch (maṛ) in it. Sri Pundarika Vidyanidhi did not like this behavior of the pujaris, as he considered such cloth to be unclean. He went to Svarupa Damodar and asked him for his opinion on the matter. Svarupa Damodar said to him, <The Lord is completely independent. He is not dependent on the rules regulating deity worship found in the smṛtis.>

Vidyanidhi immediately answered him, <I accept that Jagannath is completely independent. That does not mean that the pujaris are completely independent of the rules and regulations of scripture. They are not brahma, that they dress the Lord in unwashed cloth. Didn't you know that if you even touch cloth that has maṛ in it, you are supposed to wash your hands?>

That night Jagannath and Balaram appeared to Sri Pundarika Vidyanidhi in a dream and slapped him on his cheeks for having criticized their sevayatas. By so doing, Jagannath showed that one is not to criticize his servants for apparent lapses in behavior. The smartas are especially subject to criticizing Vaishnava behavior for failing to adhere to the obscure standards of the smṛti. Sri Pundarika Vidyanidhi, though his cheeks were swollen from the slaps, was overjoyed to have been touched by their Lordships. Svarupa Damodar also congratulated Vidyanidhi for his good fortune:

+++As he looked Pundarika Vidyanidhi over, Svarupa Damodar felt an affection arising in him. Indeed he started to float in an ocean of ecstasy. A friend always feels joy at the good fortune of a friend. The two of them began to laugh spiritedly and Svarupa Damodar said, <Listen, brother. I have never seen or heard of a punishment like this one. The Lord came personally to chastise you in a dream. I never heard of such a thing, but now I see that it has happened to you!> The two friends floated in a feeling of satisfaction. They spent day and night talking of nothing but Krishna conscious topics. (Chaitanya Bhagavat 3.10.173-177)

## **Gundicha and Rathayatra pastimes**

Sri Svarupa Damodar Goswami was one of the chief participants in the cleaning of the Gundicha temple on the eve of the Rathayatra. <Other than Nityananda, Advaita, Svarupa, Brahmananda Bharati and Paramananda Puri, everyone carried buckets of water.> (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.12.109)

During the washing of the Gundicha temple, a simple but intelligent Brahmin who was not aware of the nature of the Vaishnavas' devotional etiquette, took some water, suddenly poured it over the Lord's feet and drank it. In view of Mahaprabhu's identity as the incarnation of Krishna, it was certainly no offense to drink the water which had washed Mahaprabhu's feet even though it was done inside the temple of the Lord, but here Mahaprabhu acted as an exemplar for the world and showed dissatisfaction at the Brahmin's behavior in order that no other person imitate him and become an offender to the feet of the Supreme Lord. He let his anger be known to Svarupa Damodar who caught the Bengali Brahmin and pushed him out of the temple. The next instant, however, he returned to the Lord's side and asked him to forgive the Brahmin. Though a Vaishnava may externally appear to be hard-hearted, internally he or she is always filled with compassion and thinks of the welfare of every living being.

Every year during Balaram, Jagannath and Subhadra's ratha festival, the Lord would make four kirtan groups with his devotees. Svarupa Damodar would sing in the first of these, with Advaita participating as the principal dancer. With other kirtan groups from Shantipur, Sri Khandā and Kulina Grama, there were

seven sampradayas altogether. In each group, there were two drummers, meaning that there were 14 altogether. When the kirtan started in each of the seven groups, Mahaprabhu demonstrated his divine powers by appearing simultaneously in the midst of each one of them. Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur writes, <Just as the Lord expands into numerous forms during the rasa dance and to marry the queens in Dvaraka, Lord Chaitanya expanded in order to be present in the midst of each sampradayas' kirtan. The members of each group were convinced that the Lord was in his group alone and in none of the others.>

When Mahaprabhu wished to dance madly, he would have the seven groups come together and would dance in their midst, appointing nine singers and making Svarupa Damodar the principal singer. As the devotees became progressively intoxicated by the kirtan, Mahaprabhu danced frenziedly for many moments. After this, Mahaprabhu's mood changed. Svarupa Damodar was able to understand the Lord's intention and began to sing,

\*sei to paraṇanatha painu | jaha lagi madana-dahane jhuri genu ||

+++<I have finally found my life's lord, for whom I had so long burned in the flames of desire.>

Bhaktivinoda Thakur writes, <As the Lord's frenzied dancing came to an end, he became absorbed in the mood of Radharani at Kurukṣetra. This song about meeting the beloved after a long separation came naturally to Svarupa Damodar's lips.> As he felt the mood of union strengthening, the Lord began to loudly recite the following verse:

\*yaḥ kaumaraharaḥ sa eva hi varas ta eva caitra-kṣapas

\*te conmilita-malati-surabhayaḥ prauḍhaḥ kadambanilaḥ |

\*sa caivasmi tathapi tatra surata-vyapara-lila-vidhau

\*reva-rodhasi vetasi-taru-tale cetaḥ samutkaṇṭhate || (Kavya-prakasa 1)

+++My husband (vara) is the same who took my maidenhead

+++and these the moondrenched nights we knew;

+++the very breeze is blowing from the Vindhya hills,  
+++heavy with the scent of newly blossomed jasmine.  
+++I too am still the same;  
+++and yet with all my heart I yearn for the reedbeds by the stream  
+++which knew our happy, graceful,  
+++unending bouts of love.

This verse was written about a mundane lover and his mistress, but Mahaprabhu recited it with great respectful feeling. No one could understand what was his hidden intention other than Svarupa Damodar.

+++The Lord repeated this verse again and again. No one but Svarupa Damodar could understand his intention. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.13.122)

When Rupa Goswami heard the Lord recite this verse, he himself composed a verse which revealed the deeper meaning which the Lord had envisioned. He wrote it down on a palm leaf and hid it in the roof of his cottage. The Lord somehow or other found this palm leaf and when he read it was overcome by prema.

+++When Mahaprabhu went to the residence of Srila Rupa Goswami, He accidentally saw the palm leaf on the roof, and thus He read the verse composed by him. After reading the verse, he went into a ecstatic mood. While he was in that state, Srila Rupa Goswami came and immediately fell down on the floor like a stick.

+++ The Lord got up and gave him a slap. Then, he embraced him and began to speak as follows: <No one knows the purport of my verse. How could you understand my intention?>

Saying this, Lord Chaitanya Mahaprabhu bestowed various blessings upon Rupa Goswami, and taking the verse, he later showed it to Svarupa Goswami. With great wonder, the Lord asked him how Rupa Goswami could have understood

the intentions of his mind. Srila Svarupa Damodar Goswami replied, <If Rupa Goswami can understand your mind, I believe it must be the result of your special benediction.> (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.13.66-72)

Rupa Goswami's verse was the following:

\*priyaḥ so'yaṁ kṛṣṇaḥ saha-carī kurukṣetra-militaḥ

\*tathāhaṁ sa radhā tad idam ubhayorḥ saṅgama-sukham |

\*tathāpy antaḥ-khelan-madhura-murali-pancama-juṣe

\*mano me kalindi-pulina-vipinaya spṛhayati || (Padyavali, 383)

+++O companion! This is my beloved Krishna

+++meeting me here in Kurukṣetra;

+++and I am the same Radha,

+++and both of us are feeling the joy of union.

+++Even so, my mind wishes for the forest

+++by the banks of the Yamuna

+++where the fifth note of his flute

+++plays sweetly within my heart.

Mahāprabhu's vision was that the Jagannath temple was Kurukṣetra and the Gundicha temple Vrindavan. In the mood of a gopi, he began to pull on Jagannath's chariot, pulling him back to Vrindavan. Sri Svarupa Damodar Goswami was able to understand all of these various moods that Mahāprabhu experienced during the Rathayatra.

+++The Lord had relished these topics in his room with Svarupa Damodar for days and nights. When he was overcome with this mood while dancing before the Lord's chariot, he would repeat this verse while gazing upon Jagannath's face. No one can describe Sri Svarupa Damodar Goswami's good fortune, for he was completely absorbed, body, mind and soul, in the Lord. His senses are the

Lord's senses, and he would sing so that the Lord could more deeply relish the sentiments of love. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.13.161-4)

Jagannath Deva lives in Dvaraka and desires to go once a year to Vrindavan. This is symbolized by the Rathayatra festival when he travels from the Jagannath temple (Dvaraka) to Gundicha (Vṛndyana). When he goes to Vrindavan, Jagannath does not take Lakshmi with him, because Lakshmi is not qualified to participate in the Vrindavan lila. Only the gopis have such qualifications, and Radha is the best of the gopis.

++Svarupa said, <Listen, my Lord, to the reason for this. Lakshmi does not have the right to participate in the games of Vrindavan. Krishna's companions in the Vrindavan lila are the gopis, and there are none but they who can enchant his mind.> (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.14.122-3)

+++Amongst the gopis, Radha is the best. She is a treasure chest of jewels of love in the bright and spotless sentiment of conjugal love. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.14.160)

Jagannath mounted his chariot after telling Lakshmi that he would be back on the very next day. When Lakshmi saw that the Lord was late in returning, she became angry and gathering up her forces, sallied forth to attack her beloved. Her servants captured the servants of Lord Jagannath and brought them to her. Such lovers' quarrels are not heard of anywhere in the world. Nevertheless, the mana (loving jealousy) of the gopis is superior to that of Lakshmi, and of all the gopis, that of Radha is the purest. When Mahaprabhu wished to hear about the gopis' mana from Svarupa Damodar, Svarupa gave him great satisfaction by answering extensively. He was always able to please the Lord because he knew his wishes so intimately.

## **Bhagavan Acharya and his brother**

Sri Svarupa Damodar Goswami had a close friendship with the lame Bhagavan



Acharya of Halisahar.

+++Bhagavan Acharya was a great devotee, a scholar and a man of refined habits. He came to Purushottam to be with the Lord. He was an incarnation of a cowherd who served Krishna in the mood of friendship. His dealings with Svarupa Damodar were also those of a close friend. He was completely surrendered to the Lord's lotus feet, and he occasionally invited him to eat at his residence. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.2.84-6)

Bhagavan Acharya was a generous and unpretentious Vaishnava. Even so, his father Satananda Khan was a very materialistic person and his younger brother Gopal Bhattacharya was a mayavadi. When Gopal Bhattacharya came to Puri, the simple, straightforward Bhagavan Acharya asked Svarupa Damodar to listen to his brother speak on Saṅkara's Vedānta-bhāṣya: <Gopal, my younger brother, has come here after finishing his study of Vedānta philosophy. Come everyone and hear the commentary upon Vedānta from him.>

Svarupa Damodar Goswami, however, somewhat angry out of love for Bhagavan Acharya, answered as follows: <You have lost your intelligence in the association of Gopal, and now you are eager to hear the Mayavada philosophy. When a Vaishnava listens to the Sariraka-bhāṣya, the Mayavada commentary upon Vedānta-sūtra, he gives up the attitude that the Lord is the master and the living entity is his servant. Instead, he considers himself to be the Supreme Lord. The Mayavada philosophy is so dangerous that even a highly elevated devotee who has accepted Krishna as his life and soul changes his attitude when he reads the Mayavada philosophy.>

Bhagavan Acharya continued, <We are all fixed at the lotus feet of Krishna with our hearts and souls. Therefore the Sariraka-bhāṣya cannot change our minds.>

Svarupa Damodar replied, <Nevertheless, when we hear the Mayavada philosophy, we hear that Brahman is the only spiritual reality and that the universe of maya is false, but we gain no spiritual understanding. When a devotee hears the Mayavadi say that the living entity is only imaginary and that the Supreme Lord is a manifestation of ignorance, it breaks his heart and life.> (Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.2.92-99)

## Svarupa watches for rasabhasa

++Svarupa Damodar was the personification of ecstatic love, fully cognizant of the transcendental mellows in relationship with Krishna. He was like a second manifestation of Mahaprabhu. If someone wrote a book or composed verses and songs and wanted to recite them before Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, Svarupa Damodar would have to first examine them before the Lord would agree to listen. Mahaprabhu was never pleased to hear books or verses opposed to siddhanta, nor did he like hearing rasabhasa, an improper mixture of devotional sentiments. It was the practice of Svarupa Damodar Goswami to examine all works of literature to find out whether their conclusions were correct. Only then would he allow them to be heard by the Lord. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.10.110-114)

One day a poet came from eastern Bengal who wrote according to his own whim. He had written a play and had read it to Bhagavan Acharya who then asked Svarupa Damodar to give an opinion on it. If Svarupa Damodar approved then it could be presented to Mahaprabhu for his enjoyment. Many of the Vaishnavas had praised the literary qualities of the play, and Svarupa Damodar finally agreed to read it after repeated requests from his friend. But after hearing only the invocation verse, Svarupa Damodar pointed out numerous faults in it, demonstrating how it contradicted Vaishnava dogma. When he saw the poet's distress at being criticized, Svarupa Damodar became compassionate and said,

\*jaho bhagavata paṇo vaiṣṇavera sthane |

\*ekanta asraya karo caitanya-caraṇe ||

\*caitanyera bhakta-gaṇera nitya karo saṅga |

\*tabe to janiba siddhanta-samudra-taraṅga || (Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.5.131-2)

+++Go and study the Bhagavat from a Vaishnava. Take exclusive shelter of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's lotus feet. Associate constantly with the devotees of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. Only then will you be able to understand all the waves of the ocean of Vaishnava philosophy.

It was in Bhagavan Acharya's house that Choṭa Hari Das came to beg for fine

rice from Madhavi Devi and engaged in conversation with her. As a result of his conversing with a woman, Mahaprabhu ostracized Choṭa Hari Das. The Lord was as hard as a thunderbolt towards Hari Das, and Sri Svarupa Damodar Goswami made an attempt to intercede, persuading Hari Das to eat after he had undertaken a fast. However, Mahaprabhu remained untouched by Svarupa Damodar's efforts and a year later, Hari Das went to Prayag and gave up his life.

## **Svarupa and the Goswamis**

When Sanatan Goswami came alone to Puri from Mathura, he caught scabies in the Jharikhaṇḍa jungle. In Puri, he stayed in Hari Das Thakur's cottage where Mahaprabhu came to see him daily, embracing him despite the pus-filled sores which covered his body. Ashamed at his condition, Sanatan decided to commit suicide, but was prevented from doing so by the all-knowing Lord. During his stay in Puri, Sanatan was introduced to all the devotees of the Lord including Svarupa Damodar.

Govardhana Majumdar's son, Raghunath Das tricked his guru and family priest Yadunandana Acharya into giving him permission to leave his home. He walked to Puri in only twelve days where he met Mahaprabhu. Mahaprabhu was extremely merciful to Raghunath and turned him over to Sri Svarupa Damodar Goswami for tutelage. From that day on he was known as Svarupa's Raghu.

+++When he saw Raghunath's thin and dirty body, the Lord felt sympathy for him. He turned to Svarupa Damodar and said, <I am turning this Raghunath over to you. I want you to take care of him as though he were your own son and personal servant. I have three Raghunaths in my entourage. From now on, we will call this one Svarupa's Raghu.> After he had said these words, the Lord took Raghunath's hand and placed it in that of Svarupa Damodar. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.3.201-4)

Raghunath Das never spoke directly to Mahaprabhu. If he wished to make a submission to the Lord, he made it through either Svarupa Damodar or Govinda. He told Svarupa Damodar repeatedly that he wished to hear Mahaprabhu's personal instructions on how to practice the spiritual life. After Svarupa passed

this request on to the Lord,

+++Mahaprabhu smiled and told Raghunath Das, <I have appointed Svarupa Damodar to be your instructor. You may learn from him about the spiritual practices and their goal. I myself do not know as much as he. Nevertheless, if you have faith in my orders, you may fix your direction from the following words: Do not listen to gossip. Don't engage in gossip. You should not eat very palatable food, nor should you dress very nicely. Always chant the holy name of Lord Krishna without any expectation of honor, and offering all respect to others. Mentally render service to Radha and Krishna in Vrindavan. I have briefly given you my instructions, you will learn about them in detail from Svarupa Damodar. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.6.233-8)

On the occasion of Hari Das Thakur's disappearance, the Lord initiated the performance of sankirtan. The devotees surrounded Hari Das Thakur's body and Svarupa Damodar sang the Holy Names with the devotees while Vakresvara Pandit danced. Svarupa Damodar then went to the Jagannath temple to seek prasada for the feast which followed the burial of Hari Das and he joined Jagadananda Pandit and others to serve the devotees.

Raghunath Bhatta, the son of Tapana Mishra, left his home in Benares to come to Puri via Bengal. When he met Mahaprabhu, the Lord embraced him and introduced him to Svarupa Damodar and the other devotees.

### **Mahaprabhu's intense austerities**

At a certain time, Mahaprabhu went through a period of intense austerity. Constantly crying the names of Krishna, he lost a great deal of weight due to his feelings of separation. He slept on a bed of plantain bark, taking no notice of the pain which resulted when his bones rubbed against the bark. The devotees, however, were greatly distressed to see his suffering. Jagadananda Pandit in particular was affected and he decided to do something about it. He obtained some fine cloth and dyed it saffron, and then filled it with cotton from the silk

cotton tree. In this way he made both a mattress and a pillow for the Lord's comfort. Jagadananda then asked Govinda Das to give the mattress and pillow to the Lord and Svarupa Damodar to convince him to use them. When it was time for the Lord to go to bed, he saw the nice bed and asked angrily, <Who has made this bed?> When he heard from Govinda that Jagadananda Pandit had given it, he hesitated because Jagadananda was Satyabhama's incarnation and given to fits of jealous anger. Even so, he had Govinda remove Jagadananda's bedding and went to sleep on the plantain bark bed. When Svarupa Damodar reminded the Lord that Jagadananda would be distressed if he did not use his bedding, he answered, <A mattress and pillow? Why don't you just go and get me a bed? A sannyasi is supposed to sleep on the ground. Jagadananda wants me to become a sense enjoyer. This is shameful.>

Jagadananda was indeed upset when he heard from Svarupa Damodar that Mahaprabhu had refused the bedding. Svarupa Damodar cleverly made a mattress and pillow out of dried banana leaves torn into small pieces and stuffed into pieces of the Lord's used clothes. Despite his reluctance, the Lord accepted this new bedding. This satisfied all the devotees with the exception of Jagadananda, who asked the Lord permission to leave for Vrindavan. Mahaprabhu said, <Jagadananda is angry with me, that is why he wants to go to Vrindavan.> This story gives a brilliant example of Svarupa Damodar's expertise in serving the Lord.

## **Mahaprabhu's ecstasies**

As Mahaprabhu's feelings of separation intensified to the point of seeming insanity, he was kept at night in the Gambhira, behind three locked doors. One day, Svarupa and Govinda noticed that even though the doors were still bolted, Mahaprabhu was missing. In great anxiety, the two of them started to look for the Lord everywhere. Finally they found him near the Lion's Gate of the Jagannath temple, lying unconscious on the ground with all his joints loosened, his entire form lengthened. Svarupa Damodar started to sing the names of Krishna into the Lord's ear until suddenly he jumped up, his body returning to its normal condition, and shouted, <Haribol!> When the Lord returned to normal consciousness, Svarupa Damodar led him back to the Gambhira.

One day, the Lord saw the sand dunes and took them to be Govardhana. He ran towards them, while Svarupa Damodar and Jagadananda ran behind him. His body was overwhelmed by the ecstatic transformations and he fell to the ground in a faint. When the devotee's saw the Lord in this state, they began to cry. He partially regained consciousness when the devotees started to chant the Holy Name aloud. In this state, he started to prattle, <I was at Govardhana. I saw Krishna herding the cows and playing the flute. When they heard the flute, the gopis came running toward him. Srimati Radharani was there and Krishna took here into a grotto. Then suddenly you all started to call me back here. Why did you do that? Just to bring me pain?> The Lord began to cry and the devotees, affected by his great distress at losing his vision, and they joined him in shedding tears.

A few days later, Mahaprabhu was in the Gambhira in the divyonmada state, the madness of separation. Svarupa Damodar and Ramananda Raya stayed up until the middle of the night with the Lord enjoying discussions of Krishna's pastimes. Finally, after a great deal of effort, they managed to persuade the Lord to lie down and take some rest, after which they each returned to their own quarters. Govinda also slept in the Gambhira. As he chanted the names of Krishna, Mahaprabhu suddenly heard the sound of Krishna's flute and in the ecstasy which overcame him, he ran out of the Gambhira, even though there were three doors bolted from the outside. This time he fell down amongst a herd of Tailaṅgi cows to the south of the Lion's Gate. When Govinda heard no answer from the Lord, despite calling for him, he informed Svarupa Damodar of the situation.

Svarupa Damodar organized a search party of devotees with torches until finally they found him lying unconscious in the midst of the cows. This time, his limbs were retracted into his body giving it the appearance of a tortoise; his mouth was covered with foam, there were eruptions on his body and his eyes were filled with tears. He looked like a pumpkin, without any limbs. Externally suffering as though poisoned, internally he was experiencing divine ecstasies. The cows had surrounded the Lord and were sniffing his body, and even when the devotees shooed them away, they would come back, attracted by the Lord. After many attempts to arouse the Lord, when the devotees failed to bring him back to consciousness, they picked him up and carried him to the Gambhira. There they started singing the Holy Names aloud in kirtan. This continued for some time until finally the Lord returned to an external state of consciousness and his body also took on its normal appearance.

Still in a trance-like state, Mahaprabhu asked Svarupa Damodar, <Where have you brought me? I had heard the sound of Krishna's flute and I went to Vrindavan. I saw Krishna with the cattle, playing his flute. Radha and the gopis understood his signal and came to the bower cottage trysting place. I followed them there and felt ecstasy when hearing the sound of their tinkling ornaments and their voices and laughter. You forced me to come back here and I can no longer hear their humorous conversations, nor the sound of their ornaments and musical instruments.>

Sri Svarupa Damodar Goswami recognized the Lord's state and sang a verse from the Bhagavat in his sweet voice:

\*ka stry-aṅga te kala-padayata-veṇu-gita-

\*sammohitarya-caritan na calet trilokyam |

\*trailokya-saubhagam idaṁ ca nirikṣya rupam

\*yad go-dvija-druma-mṛgaḥ pulakany abibhrat || (BhP 10.29.40)

+++O dear one!

+++What woman within these three worlds

+++would not be captivated by the sweet rhythms

+++of your wonderful flute-song?

+++What woman would not abandon

+++her vows of chastity as a result?

+++For upon beholding your beauty,

+++the most sublime in this universe

+++even cows, birds, trees and animals

+++horripilate in jubilation. (BhP 10.29.40)

As soon as the Lord heard this verse, he once again merged into the mood of the

gopis and began to sing all the statements which the gopis made in separation from Krishna, known as citra-jalpa.

### **The Lord jumps into the sea**

Krishnadas Kaviraj Goswami has described another extraordinary event of this type. Once, during a full-moon evening in autumn, the Lord was inspired to remember Krishna's rasa-lila. Accompanied by his devotees, he wandered through the Ai Ṭoṭa garden next to the Gundicha temple, relishing songs about the rasa dance. As they approached the seashore, Mahaprabhu took the sea to be the Yamuna River and jumped into it. His body floated south toward Konarka until a fisherman caught him in his nets, thinking him to be a large fish. When he dragged the Lord on board his boat, he saw that all his limbs were distended, transformed into a giant human form. Upon touching him, the fisherman was immediately infused with prema and started crying and calling the name of Krishna.

Meanwhile, Svarupa Damodar and the other devotees were desperately seeking the Lord. Finally they saw the fisherman standing on the shore with the Lord on his shoulders. When Svarupa saw the fisherman in a state of ecstatic transformation, he came and explained who Mahaprabhu was, but still had to slap him several times before he calmed down. Then the devotees began to sing the Holy Names aloud until the Lord jumped up with a roar. Once again, while in a state of half-absorption in trance, Mahaprabhu recounted everything that he had experienced. Mahaprabhu had been in the world of Krishna's rasa-lila and water sports. When they heard all his ecstatic utterances, the devotees trembled in awareness of the Lord's divine loving madness. Then they led him back to the Gambhira.

### **The Lord's final days**



When Advaita Acharya sent the riddle message back from Bengal with Jagadananda Pandit, indicating that the Lord's pastimes would soon come to an end, Svarupa Damodar became distracted, while the Lord's divine madness became more and more intense. In his final instructions to Svarupa Damodar and Ramananda Raya, the Lord made it very clear that Harinama sankirtan is the supreme method for attaining love for Krishna.

+++The Lord, in a wave of jubilation say, <Listen Svarupa Damodar and Ramananda Raya! In the age of Kali, Harinama sankirtan is the supreme means of deliverance. In the age of Kali, Krishna is to be worshiped by the congregational chanting of his Holy Names. This is the way that an intelligent person attains the lotus feet of Krishna. Through the chanting of the Holy Name, all of one's sinful reactions are extinguished and all auspiciousness arises until finally one experiences the joys of love for Krishna.> (Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.20.8-11)

After saying this, the Lord recited his own eight verses known as the Sikṣaṣṭaka. As he relished them, he felt more and more humble in feelings of separation from Krishna. Taking on the mood of Srimati Radharani, he became totally absorbed in love for Krishna.

Sri Svarupa Damodar Goswami and Ramananda Raya remained constantly by the Lord's side throughout his ecstasies in divyonmada, calming him and enriching his feelings of love. Sri Svarupa Damodar Goswami left the world on the day of Lord Jagannath's Rathayatra, not long after the Lord's disappearance.

## **Srila Kashisvara Pandit**

\*pura vṛndavane ceṭau sthitau bhṛṅgara-bhaṅgurai /

\*sri-kasisvara-govindau tau jatau prabhu-sevakau //

+++ Srila Kashisvara Pandit (also Brahmachari or Goswami) was Krishna's servant Bhṛṅgara and Govinda was Bhaṅgura. They became Mahaprabhu's servants in Gaura-lila. Some Kashisvara was the sakhi Sasirekha. (Gaura-gaṇoddesa-dipika 137)

Kashisvara Pandit's home was in the village of Catara in the district of Hooghly, about one mile from the present day Serampore (Sriramapura) railway station. His father was Vasudeva Bhattacharya, a Brahmin of the Vatsya gotra in the line of Kanva. He also had the title Chaudhuri. The temple which belonged to Kashisvara Pandit is situated in the neighborhood of Catara village is known as Chaudhuri Paṛa. He established deities of Gauranga and Sri Radha Govinda. There is an annual festival there on Dola Purnima. Kashisvara Pandit was very powerful physically. Rudra Pandit of Ballabhapura was his nephew.

### **Kashisvara was Ishvara Puri's disciple**

Kashisvara Pandit was a disciple of Ishvara Puri who had received much mercy from him. For this reason he is counted as one of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's branches. Sri Govinda was also Ishvara Puri's disciple. Both of them devotedly served their spiritual master as long as he was present in this world. Just before he disappeared, he instructed them both to go engage in Mahaprabhu's service. Govinda was the first to come to Puri to serve the Lord after the disappearance of their guru; Kashisvara travelled throughout India on a pilgrimage before finally coming to Mahaprabhu's lotus feet.

+++<I am a servant of Ishvara Puripada, my name is Govinda. On his order I have come to you. At the time of his departure, my master ordered me: Go to Sri Krishna Chaitanya and serve him. Kashisvara will also come after he has seen the pilgrimage sites. I have come directly to you.> (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.10.132-4)

+++On another day, Kashisvara Gosani arrived; the Lord greeted him respectfully and gave him a place to stay with him. (Chaitanya Charitamrita

2.10.185)

The Lord turned to Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya, <The servant of my spiritual master is my superior, so how can I accept his service. On the other hand, if I do not obey his order, that too would be an offence. What should I do?>

Sarvabhauma answered that he should most certainly obey the instruction of his spiritual master and so the Lord did as his guru had ordered him and accepted Govinda and Kashisvara Pandit as his personal servants.

\*sa susruvan matari bhargaveṇa

\*pitur niyogat prahr̥taṁ dviṣadvat /

\*pratyagrahid agraja-sanaṁ tad-

\*ajna guruṇaṁ hy avicaraṇiya // (Raghuvamśa, 14.46)

+++On the order of his father, Parasurama killed his own mother as though she were an enemy. When he heard this, Lakṣmaṇa accepted the order of his elder brother Rama, for the orders of a guru are not to be debated.

\*nirvikaraṁ guror ajna maya karya mahatmanaḥ /

\*sreyo hy evaṁ bhavatyas ca mama caiva viśeṣataḥ //

(Ramayaṇa Ayodhya-khaṇḍa, 22.9)

+++I must follow the order of my guru because he is a great soul. You will certainly benefit from this, but even more so will I.

### **Kashisvara's service to Mahaprabhu**

Whenever Mahaprabhu went to see Jagannath, Kashisvara would use his physical strength to hold back the crowds, allowing the Lord to pass without being touched by anyone.

+++Ishvara Puri's disciples were Kashisvara Brahmachari and Govinda. At the time of his departure from this world, he instructed them both to come to Nilachala and to engage in Mahaprabhu's personal service. The Lord considered them both to be his superiors because they had personally served his spiritual master, but he nevertheless accepted their service because it was his guru's order. Govinda would engage in personal, bodily service, while Kashisvara would go before him when he went to see Jagannath. He would push people aside to make a path for the Lord so that he could go through the crowd without being touched. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 1.10.138-142)

+++Mahaprabhu joyfully took the devotees to the temple to see Jagannath. Kashisvara led the way, clearing the path, while Govinda followed carrying the Lord's waterpot. (Chaitanya Charitamrita Madbhya 12.206-7)

In Puri, the abode of the Supreme Person (Purushottam-dham), when the Lord was dancing in front of Jagannath's Rathayatra cart, three rings of people would be formed around the Lord in order to hold the people back. The innermost ring consisted of Nityananda Prabhu and other devotees, the second of Kashisvara, Mukunda and others, and the third of King Prataparudra and his bodyguards.

+++Kashisvara, Mukunda and many other devotees held hand to form a second protective circle. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.13.89)

Kashisvara was one of the seven persons who would serve maha prasada to the devotees after the kirtan at the Rathayatra. The others were Svarupa Damodar, Jagadananda, Damodar, Gopinath, Vajrinatha and Saṅkara.

Kashisvara also participated in some of the Lord's lilas in Nabadwip, such as the kirtans at Srivasa Angan and bathing in the Ganges. He was also present when the Lord went with kirtan to the house of Sridhara and drank from his iron pot. He, along with the other devotees present, cried to see the Lord's mercy on that occasion. Govinda, Govindananda, Srigarbha, Sriman, Jagadananda and Rama were others present on that occasion. (Chaitanya Bhagavat 2.23.451)

Vrindavan Das Thakur tells just how dear Kashisvara was to the Lord, calling Mahaprabhu Kashisvara's heart on one occasion (Chaitanya Bhagavat 2.1.6) and the wealth of Kashisvara's life (Kashisvara-praṇa-dhana) on another (Chaitanya Bhagavat 2.24.3).

He was also present when Mahaprabhu went to greet Advaita and the other

devotees when they arrived from Bengal. His disappearance day is on the fourteenth day of the waxing moon in the month of Karttik. According to another opinion, it is on the full moon day of the month of Asvina, when the Rasapurṇima of Radha Krishna is also celebrated.

## **Sri Bhagavan Acharya**

\*acaryo bhagavan khanjaḥ kala gaurasya kathyate |

+++Khanja Bhagavan Acharya was said to be Gauranga Mahaprabhu's expansion.

\*acaryaṁ bhagavantam tu tejomaya-kalevaram |

\*yasya smaraṇa-matreṇa gaura-prema prajayate ||

+++[I offer obeisances to] Bhagavan Acharya, whose powerful body is filled with effulgence. Just by remembering him, one will develop love for Gauranga Mahaprabhu. (Sakha-nirṇayamṛta)

Bhagavan Acharya was originally from the town of Halisahar, which is in the 24 Pargana district. Krishnadas Kaviraj Goswami writes that he is considered to be Chaitanya's branch along with Brahmananda Bharati, Sikhi Mahiti and Murari Mahiti. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 1.10.136)

It is written in the Gauḍiya Vaiṣṇava Abhidhana that Bhagavan Acharya appeared in Sri Dham Nabadwip, but left to live in Halisahar. His father Satananda Khan was a wealthy materialist, while he himself was a scholar and a great Vaishnava who worshiped in the mood of friendship.

Bhagavan Acharya was a householder. His son was named Raghunath Acharya. Both he and his son accompanied Jahnava Mata to Kheturi. (Bhakti-ratnakara 10.382)

The following further information is found in the Gauḍiya Vaiṣṇava Abhidhana:  
<Bhagavan Acharya was particularly advanced in the study of logic, so much so

that he received the title of Nyayacharya. When his father saw that he was developing the renounced spirit at a young age, he arranged for his marriage with the daughter of Nabadwip's Madhusudana Ghaṭaka. Despite this, Bhagavan Acharya overcame the entanglements of his householder life to go to live in Puri with the Lord. Mahaprabhu enjoined him to return to his wife, however, and so he came back to Bengal. He had two sons Raghunath and Ramanatha. Nevertheless, Bhagavan Acharya was unable to remain for long in householder life and he ultimately gave the responsibility for his wife and children to his brother-in-law and disciples. He then took the renounced order and returned to Puri to live with the Lord.>

### **Bhagavan Acharya in Puri**

When the devotees heard that Mahaprabhu had returned from South India, they rushed to see him. Bhagavan Acharya renounced everything and came to live there near the Lord.

+++Ramabhadra Acharya and Bhagavan Acharya came to live near the Lord, giving up all other duties. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.10.184)

+++Bhagavan Acharya was a great devotee, a scholar and a man of refined habits. He came to Purushottam to be with the Lord. He was an incarnation of a cowherd who served Krishna in the mood of friendship. His dealings with Svarupa Damodar were also those of a close friend. He was completely surrendered to the Lord's lotus feet, and he occasionally invited him to eat at his residence. He made various vegetable preparations which he personally served to the Lord. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.2.84-7)

Bhagavan Acharya would not brook any materialistic conversation, only listening to Krishna's name, form, qualities and pastimes (Chaitanya Bhagavat 3.3.188). He was one of the many devotees who came to meet Mahaprabhu in Puri after the Lord delivered Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya.

+++The great personality Bhagavan Acharya arrived. Mundane topics never entered his ears. (Chaitanya Bhagavat 3.3.188)

He was present when Mahaprabhu went to greet Advaita Acharya, along with Kashisvara Pandit, Pradyumna Mishra and others. He was also present when Mahaprabhu went into an ecstatic trance and fell into the ocean, after taking the dunes on the beach to be Govardhana.

+++Paramananda Puri, Brahmananda Bharati and others ran to the beach while Bhagavana Acharya, being lame, followed them as quickly as he could. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.14.90)

One day Bhagavan Acharya wanted to feed Mahaprabhu nicely and sent Choṭa Hari Das to beg for fine rice from Madhavi Devi. While eating, Mahaprabhu learned of this and became angry and ostracized Choṭa Hari Das. He said that for a renunciate to talk to a woman is worse than drinking poison.

\*prabhu kahe — vairagi kare prakṛti sambhaṣaṇa |

\*dekhite na paroṇ ami tahara vadana ||

+++The Lord said, <I cannot look upon the face of a someone who after taking the vows of renunciation continues to converse with women.> (Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.2.117)

## **Bhagavan Acharya's brother, Gopal**

Bhagavan Acharya was a generous and unpretentious Vaishnava. Because of these qualities he was particularly dear to Mahaprabhu. The following account of his simplicity is given in the Chaitanya Charitamrita:

Bhagavan Acharya's younger brother, Gopal Bhattacharya, had been to Kashi where he had studied Vedanta. After finishing his studies, he came to Puri to see his older brother who was quite pleased to hear that he had become learned in

the field. With great enthusiasm, Bhagavan Acharya to introduce him to Mahaprabhu. The Lord, being the indweller of all beings, knew that Gopal was a mayavadi, so he was not delighted to meet him. Even so, he formally showed a polite affection. The simple, straightforward Bhagavan Acharya went to Svarupa Damodar and asked him to hear his brother speak on Saṅkara's Vedānta-bhāṣya: <Gopal, my younger brother, has come here after finishing his study of Vedānta philosophy. Please come and hear the Vedānta commentary from him.>

Svarupa Damodar Goswami, however, somewhat angry due to his love for Bhagavan Acharya, chastised him as follows:

+++<You have lost your intelligence in the association of Gopal, and now you are eager to hear the Mayavada philosophy. When a Vaishnava listens to the Sariraka-bhāṣya, the Mayavada commentary upon Vedānta-sūtra, he gives up the attitude that the Lord is the master and the living entity is his servant. Instead, he considers himself to be the Supreme Lord. The Mayavada philosophy is so dangerous that even a highly elevated devotee who has accepted Krishna as his life and soul changes his attitude if he studies it.> (Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.2.94-6)

Bhagavan Acharya continued, even though he had been chastised by Svarupa Damodar: <The devotees are all fixed at the lotus feet of Krishna in heart and soul. Listening to the Sariraka-bhāṣya could not possibly have a negative effect on them.>

Svarupa Damodar answered with a further warning about the dangerous effects of the Mayavada philosophy. He said, <When we hear the Mayavada philosophy, not only do we hear that Brahman is the only spiritual reality and that the universe of maya is false, but we gain no spiritual understanding. When a devotee hears the Mayavadi say that the living entity is only imaginary and that the Supreme Lord is a manifestation of ignorance, it breaks his heart and soul.> (Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.2.98-99)

Svarupa Damodar's remarks made Bhagavan Acharya ashamed and a little afraid, so sent his brother Gopal back to Bengal.



## The poet from East Bengal

One day a poet came to Puri from eastern Bengal who wrote poetry according to his own whim. He had also written a play about Mahaprabhu. Since he knew Bhagavan Acharya personally, he read the play to him and afterwards to the other devotees, all of whom praised his work. They felt that Mahaprabhu should hear his play, being under the impression that he would enjoy it. Svarupa Damodar would normally censor literary works before allowing them to be read to the Lord, however; he would examine them for improper presentation of devotional sentiment and doctrine. Only if he approved could any work of poetry be presented to Mahaprabhu for his enjoyment. Since his friend Bhagavan Acharya had praised the literary qualities of the play, Svarupa Damodar finally agreed to read it after repeated requests. As soon as the poet read the invocation verse and explained it, however, and even though all the devotees were pleased, Svarupa Damodar pointed out two faults which had an offensive character.

The poet's explanation was as follows:

+++<Lord Jagannath is a most beautiful body, and Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, who is exceptionally grave, is the owner of that body. Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu has appeared here in Puri to spiritualize the entire dull material world.>  
(Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.5.114-5)

Hearing this glorification of the Lord, everyone present was delighted. Svarupa Damodar alone was not and he began to speak in great anger.

+++<You are a fool and have brought ill fortune upon yourself, for you have no faith in either of the two Lords, Jagannathdeva or Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. Lord Jagannath is completely spiritual and full of transcendental bliss, but you have said that he is nothing but a dull, destructible body composed of the inert, external energy. At the same time, you have said that Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, who is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, full in six opulences, is an ordinary living being, a spark of spiritual energy rather than the supreme fire. You have committed offenses to both Lords. This is what happens when someone who knows no theology tries to glorify the Lord.

+++ <Furthermore, you have made another great error. You have made a distinction between the Lord and his body. Such a distinction does not exist, for the Lord's body and his identity are one. This is a great offense.

At no time is there a distinction between the body and soul of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. His personal identity and His body are made of blissful spiritual energy. There is no distinction between them.> (Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.5.117-122)

When he saw the poet's distress at being criticized, Svarupa Damodar became compassionate and told him to take shelter of a pure devotee,

\*jaho bhagavata paṛo vaiṣṇavera sthane |

\*ekanta asraya karo caitanya-caraṇe ||

\*caitanyera bhakta-gaṇera nitya karo saṅga |

\*tabe to janiba siddhanta-samudra-taraṅga || (Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.5.131-2)

+++Go and study the Bhagavat from a Vaishnava. Take exclusive shelter of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's lotus feet. Associate constantly with the devotees of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. Only then will you be able to understand all the waves of the ocean of Vaishnava philosophy.

The Brahmin poet was amazed, ashamed and afraid, all at once. Svarupa Damodar was kind to him and showed him how his own verse could be reinterpreted to glorify Krishna. When he gave an elaborate explanation to the poet, he had a change of heart and surrendered to the Lord's devotees.

## **Sri Pradyumna Mishra**

\*avirbhavo gauraharer nakula-brahmacariṇi |

\*avesas ca tatha jneyo misre pradyumna-saṅgake ||

+++The Lord's avirbhava (<manifestation>) took place in Nakula Brahmachari, and his avesa (<possession>) in Pradyumna Mishra. (Gaura-gaṇoddesa-dipika 73-74)

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur has written that Pradyumna Mishra was an Orissan (Chaitanya Charitamrita 1.10.131, Anubhaṣya). Vrindavan Das Thakur has stated the same in Chaitanya Bhagavat.

+++Many of Mahaprabhu's associates took birth in Orissa. It was not long before they came and met with the Lord. Amongst them were Pradyumna Mishra, whose body was solidified prema. The great self-controlled devotees Paramananda Mahapatra and Ramananda Raya were others. (Chaitanya Bhagavat 3.3.183-4)

According to Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava Abhidhana, Pradyumna Mishra was originally a resident of Sylhet and only later moved to Orissa. He is counted amongst the branches of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu himself. The extent to which he was dear to Mahaprabhu is described in both the Chaitanya Charitamrita and Chaitanya Bhagavat:

+++Pradyumna Mishra was an ocean of love for Krishna and Lord Gaurasundara put him on the same level as himself. (Chaitanya Bhagavat 3.5.211)

+++Chief amongst the loving devotees of the Lord were Kashisvara Pandit, Bhagavan Acharya and Pradyumna Mishra. (Chaitanya Bhagavat 3.8.57)

+++The Lord felt joy on meeting Kashi Mishra, Pradyumna Mishra and Bhavanand Raya. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 1.10.131)

+++All glories to the Lord, the life of Pradyumna Mishra, the wealth of Paramananda Puri. (Chaitanya Bhagavat 1.14.2)

When Mahaprabhu returned from South India, Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya introduced Pradyumna Mishra to the Lord as a great Vaishnava.

+++Pradyumna Mishra is the best of the Vaishnavas. He was Jagannath's chief

cook and had the family title of Das. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.10.42) [FN: Das is sometimes used by Brahmana families in Orissa, though it is a lower caste name in Bengal.]

Later, Pradyumna Mishra was instructed by Mahaprabhu to go to Ramananda Raya to hear Krishna-katha. This has been extensively described in the Chaitanya Charitamrita, Antya-lila, chapter 5. Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur writes in his Gaudiya Bhaṣya to the Chaitanya Bhagavat (Adi, 14.2): <Pradyumna Mishra took birth in a Brahmin family in central Orissa. He led an exemplary pious householder life, showing nobility of character in his adherence to social etiquette. Mahaprabhu gave meaning to this behavioral standard by sending him to the great devotee, Ramananda Raya, who though not born in a material Brahmin family was the most competent instructor in the matter of bhakti-rasa. When Pradyumna Mishra went to this Vaishnava acharya to hear him glorify Krishna's pastimes in the attitude of a disciple and thereby received Mahaprabhu's causeless mercy.>

### **Pradyumna wants to hear Harikatha**

Pradyumna Mishra came one day to Mahaprabhu eagerly asking to hear some Hari-katha. Mahaprabhu replied with great humility that he was not qualified to speak on elevated matters of sacred rapture and sent him to meet Ramananda Raya. At the time, Ramananda Raya was living in the Jagannath-vallabha gardens. The service he was engaged in for the pleasure of Lord Jagannath was beyond the capacity of even great self-controlled sages, what to speak of ordinary human beings. He would prepare two young deva-dasis for the performance of a play which was to be given before Lord Jagannath, not only by training them in the songs that they would sing and in the dance they would perform, but also by bathing, dressing and decorating them. While Ramananda Raya was engaged in such service, no one was allowed to interrupt him.

The first time that Pradyumna Mishra came to see Ramananda, one of Ramananda's servants told him that he was busy doing this work and asked Mishra to sit outside and wait. After Pradyumna Mishra had been waiting a long time, Ramananda Raya finished his service and came outside and learned that

Pradyumna Mishra had been waiting there to hear about Krishna from him. He showed the Brahmin the appropriate respect and begged forgiveness for his offense in making him wait. Mishra realized that it was too late that day for his wish to be fulfilled and he returned home.

Some days later, when Mahaprabhu saw Mishra, he asked him how the meeting with Ramananda had gone and what topics they had discussed. At first, Pradyumna Mishra remained silence because of the doubts which he had about Ramananda Raya's behavior. Mahaprabhu, as the antaryami was able to understand what was going through his mind and began to glorify Ramananda's extraordinary character with great force. His words are found in the Chaitanya Charitamrita:

+++<I am a sannyasi and I consider myself to be renounced. But if I even hear the name of a woman, what to speak of seeing one, I feel an effect on my mind and body. So who is not moved by the sight of a woman? Everyone listen to me. Let me tell you about Ramananda Raya, although they are so wonderful and uncommon that they really cannot be properly described. He personally serves Jagannath's young and beautiful devadasis in every possible way. He personally bathes and dresses them and decorates them with ornaments. While doing so, he naturally sees and touches the private parts of their bodies, but even so, his mind is never affected. He teaches the girls how to physically express all the moods of love, to be acted out before Jagannath Deva, but his mind and body are as steady as wood or stone. Indeed, it is amazing that even when he touches such young girls, his mind is not disturbed. Only Ramananda has the right to do such things, and seeing him do them, I can understand that his body is not material but has been completely transformed into a spiritual entity.> (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.5.35-42)

Thus saying that Ramananda Raya was highly qualified to speak on matters connected to Krishna, the Lord sent Pradyumna Mishra back again. When he arrived in the Jagannath-vallabha gardens, Ramananda greeted him by paying obeisances. Pradyumna then heard Ramananda explained all the different topics on sambandha, abhidheya and prayojana which he had recounted to the Lord at Vidyanagara during his trip to South India. Both the speaker and the hearer completely forgot themselves in the ecstasies of Krishna-katha. The whole day passed in this way. Pradyumna Mishra felt himself to be completely fulfilled by the hearing of all these subjects of Krishna and he went to tell Mahaprabhu about it.

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur has made the following commentary on this anecdote in his Anubhāṣya: <Ordinarily, the Brahmin acts as preceptor to the three other varṇas and the sannyasi is the guru of all Brahmins in the three other asramas. The Lord wished to curb the false pride arising from these notions by sending Pradyumna Mishra, even though he was a pure blood Brahmin, to take instruction from Ramananda Raya, who belonged to the lowest varṇa, that of the sudras, and to the lowest asrama, that of the householder. The Lord himself, though a sannyasi, also showed the same example by taking instruction personally from him, accepting the conclusions which he preached.>

## **Sikhi Mahiti**

\*ragalekha kalakelyau radha-dasyau pura sthitaṁ |

\*te jñeye sikhi-mahati tat-svasa madhavi kramat ||

+++ Sikhi Mahiti and his sister Madhavi Devi were previously Ragalekha and Kalakeli, two of Srimati Radharani's servants. (Gaura-gaṇoddesa-dīpikā 189)

Sikhi Mahiti was an Orissan, considered to be one of Mahāprabhu's most intimate associates and one of his personal branches, who lived in Purushottam Kṣetra. He was a servant of the Jagannath deity with the title of likhanādhikāri (Chaitanya Charitamṛta 2.10.42). Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur explains that this was a temple secretarial position, mainly responsible for publishing the annual ephemeris known as Mātala Panji.

Sikhi Mahiti was a great soul, noted for his great compassion and his pure heart. Besides his highly qualified sister Madhavi, he had a brother named Murari Mahanta or Mahanti, who also had strong faith in Mahāprabhu. Their devotion to him was spontaneous and unwavering. They never forgot Mahāprabhu for even a moment and the Lord also poured down unlimited affection on them.

+++Lord, this is Murari Mahati, the brother of Sikhi Mahati's brother. He knows

nothing other than your lotus feet. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.10.44)

Murari and Madhavi became Mahaprabhu's devotees before their older brother. However, much as they tried to persuade him, they were not able to convince him that the Moon of Vrindavan had become incarnate in Sri Gaurasundara. In his Anubhaṣya, Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur has described how Sikhi Mahiti finally came to receive Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's mercy. The following is a summary of his account, which is based on Kavi Karṇapura's Chaitanya-carita Mahakavya (13.89-109): One day, after his younger brother and sister had spent some time trying to convince him of Mahaprabhu's divinity, Sikhi Mahiti dozed off. Towards the end of the night, he had a dream in which he saw his brother and sister looking upon the feet of Lord Gaurasundara and telling him to wake up. Startled, Sikhi Mahiti opened his eyes and saw that his siblings were indeed before him. The wonderful dream had inspired ecstatic symptoms in him and his eyes were filled with tears. He ecstatically embraced his brother and sister who asked him what was the reason for his joy. Sikhi Mahiti saw their wonder and in order to put their minds at ease said to them: <I have just had the most wonderful dream. Listen to me. Today, I have finally become a believer in the glories of the son of Sachi, Sri Gauranga. In my dream I saw Mahaprabhu taking darshan of Lord Jagannath in the temple, and as he was doing so, he entered into the body of Jagannath and then came out again. He did this over and over and I can still see the Lord doing it. Am I still dreaming? The Lord of unlimited compassion, Gaurasundara, called me by name and then embraced me with his long arms of unblemished beauty.> As he recalled his dream, Sikhi Mahiti became overwhelmed by devotional ecstasy, whereupon Murari and Madhavi asked him to accompany them to the temple to behold Lord Jagannath. As they entered the temple, they saw Mahaprabhu standing at the Jagamohana gazing upon the deity. They started to cry tears of joy and Sikhi Mahiti saw his dream come to life before him. Then Lord Gaurasundara embraced him, saying, <You are Murari's brother.> At the Lord's touch, Sikhi Mahiti fell into an ocean of ecstasy and from that time on, he forgot everything else but the Lord's service.

Krishnadas Kaviraj Goswami's Chaitanya Charitamrita, Vrindavan Das Thakur's Chaitanya Bhagavat and Narahari's Bhakti-ratnakara all describe the extent to which Sikhi Mahiti was dear to Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu:

+++The Lord joyfully met Svarupa Damodar and then Sikhi Mahiti and Bhavananda Raya. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.1.130)

+++All the devotees joyfully came forward to meet the Lord, and he gave them an embrace of love each one of them. Amongst the devotees who were there were Kashi Mishra, Ramananda Raya, Pradyumna Mishra, Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya, Vaṇinatha, Sikhi Mahiti and others. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.16.253-4)

Sikhi Mahiti is mentioned as being present at the meeting of the Bengali devotees with those of Puri in Chaitanya Bhagavat, 3.8.60.

+++ Sikhi Mahiti and others said that it was time to go and take darshan of Jagannath Deva. (Bhakti-ratnakara 8.237)

Sikhi Mahiti was one of Mahaprabhu's three and a half most intimate devotees.

+++The Lord accepted Sikhi Mahiti's sister as one of Radha's friends. In the entire world, there were only three and a half devotees who were so worthy. They were Svarupa Damodar Goswami, Ramananda Raya and Sikhi Mahiti. His sister was the half person. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.2.105-6)

## **Sri Gopinath Paṭṭanayaka**

Gopinath Paṭṭanayaka was Bhavananda Raya's second son. According to the tenth chapter of the Adi-lila of Chaitanya Charitamrita, Mahaprabhu says that Bhavananda Raya was formerly the king Paṇḍu and that his sons were the five Paṇḍavas. All of these five sons were very dear to the Lord.

+++Your sons, Ramananda Raya, Gopinath Paṭṭanayaka, Kalanidhi, Sudhanidhi and Vaṇinatha Nayaka, are all objects of my affection. Ramananda and I are different in body only, in spirit we are one. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 1.10.133-4)



Brahmagiri or Alalanath is about 12 miles west of Jagannath Puri. Beṇṭapura is a small village not far from there. Bhavananda Raya was a landowner living in this village. His descendants, who nowadays use the surname Chaudhuri-Paṭṭanayaka continue to reside in this village.

## **Gopinath falls in arrears**

Gopinath Paṭṭanayaka was King Prataparudra's tahsildar in Malajaṭhya Daṇḍapaṭa, which is now the district of Midnapur in West Bengal. The tahsildar's duty is to collect taxes. On one occasion, there was a shortfall of 200,000 kahans of cowries. [FN: a kahan ' 16 paṇas, 1 paṇa ' 20 gaṇḍas, 1 gaṇḍa ' 4 cowries.] In the Orissan language, the crown prince is known as Baṛa Jana. At that time, capital punishment was given by throwing the prisoner down from a scaffold to be impaled on swords. This system was known in Orissan as the caṅga. When Gopinath Paṭṭanayaka could not come up with the tax moneys, King Prataparudra's son, the Baṛa Jana, decided to punish him by having him thrown from the caṅga.

When they saw Gopinath in this dangerous situation, some of Bhavananda Raya's well-wishers came to Mahaprabhu to appeal to him to intervene. When Mahaprabhu asked what the reason for Gopinath's punishment was, one of the supplicants answered, <Gopinath owes the government treasury 200,000 kahanas in back taxes and is unable to make a cash payment. He offered to pay back the money by selling some of his possessions and for that reason he brought a dozen fine horses to the palace. The King sent one of his princes who is an expert in evaluating horses, but he offered a price far below what the horses were actually worth. This prince had a physical quirk in that he repeatedly stretched his neck, looking upward and then from side to side. Gopinath was angry at the attempt to cheat him and so he responded by mocking the prince, saying, <<My horses lift their necks, but at least they don't keep looking up in the air! I don't see how they can be worth so little.>> In other words, he suggested that his horses were more valuable than the prince himself.

<The prince was insulted by this comment and decided to take revenge. He went to the King and got permission to put Gopinath on the caṅga in order to

extract the money which he owed. He has now put him on the scaffold and is prepared to throw him down on the swords.>

Upon hearing this account, Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu took an attitude of impartiality and replied with affectionate anger, asking how the King could be at fault if Gopinath Paṭṭanayaka did not pay his dues. How could the King be at fault for punishing someone who has committed an offense? What could he do about that?

### **The Lord saves Gopinath**

However, subsequently, the news came that Bhavananda Raya and his entire family had been imprisoned and Svarupa Damodar Goswami and other close companions of the Lord appealed to him to do something. Mahaprabhu, who as the Supreme Lord is capable of doing anything, or changing anything that has been done, or of remaining inactive if he so wishes, instructed everyone to take shelter of Jagannath Deva's lotus feet and that He would take care of the problem.

As the Supersoul within the heart, the Lord inspired Haricandana Patra, one of King Prataparudra's ministers, to recount Gopinath's entire story to the King, asking him to repeal the death sentence which had been condemned. The King was surprised that he had not been informed of events and immediately had the death sentence repealed and Gopinath was released.

+++Gopinath Paṭṭanayaka was Ramananda Raya's brother. By the Lord's grace, he was delivered from a sentence of death given by the King. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.1.265)

Mahaprabhu inquired about how Vaṇinatha and the other members of Gopinath's family reacted when they were imprisoned. The messenger replied,

+++<Vaṇinatha was without fear; he was constantly chanting the maha-mantra—

Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare. Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare. He counted each mantra on the fingers of his hands, and after he had finished chanting a thousand times, he would make a mark on his body.>

Mahaprabhu was pleased to hear that Vaṇinatha was acting in this way. Who can understand the mysterious workings of the Lord's mercy? (Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.9.56-9)

Mahaprabhu complained to the King's priest, Kashi Mishra, however, that people were repeatedly coming to disturb him, trying to get him to interceded on behalf of Bhavananda Raya's family which was misappropriating state funds. He told him that he was thinking of moving to Alalanath where he could get some peace. Kashi Mishra talked him out of going, but told Maharaj Prataparudra of how the Lord had been affected by these events. As a result, in order to please the Lord, the King not only pardoned Gopinath Paṭṭanayaka but he forgave him his debt and doubled his salary. Appreciative of the Lord's mercy, Gopinath came and placed his head, which had been honored with a silken turban personally wrapped around his head by the King, at the Lord's lotus feet and said:

+++<The King has pardoned my tax arrears. He has reappointed me to my post and doubled my salary, while honoring me with this silken turban. All of this is due to your mercy. What a difference! One moment I am on the caṅga, preparing myself to die, the next I am being given honors like the silk turban. When on the caṅga, I began meditating on your lotus feet, and this is the result of that meditation. People are amazed at this turn of events and they sing the glories of your mercy. I know, however, my Lord, that these are not the principal results of meditating upon your lotus feet, but are simply a secondary effect. Material gains are only temporary. Your real mercy has been granted to Ramananda Raya and Vaṇinatha Raya, for you have granted them freedom from material sensual entanglements, a blessing that you have not given to me. I pray, O Lord, that you bestow your pure mercy upon me so that I may also become renounced. I no longer wish for material enjoyment.> (Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.9.133-9)

The Lord heard Gopinath's heartfelt prayer and answered:

+++<Whether you are involved in material activities or become completely renounced, you and your brothers are my eternal servants, birth after birth. But I

ask you to obey one order of mine. Do not spend money which belongs to the King. Pay the King his dues and then spend the balance for religious and fruitive activities. Don't spend a farthing for sinful activities, otherwise you will be the loser both in this life and the next.> (Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.9.141-4)

## **Sri Ramachandra Puri**

\*vibhiṣaṇo yaḥ prag asid ramacandra-puri smṛtaḥ |

\*uvacato gaura harir naitad ramasya karaṇam ||

\*jaṭila radhika-svasruḥ karyato ‘visad eva tam |

\*ato mahaprabhur bhikṣa-saṅkocaditato ‘karot ||

+++Ramachandra’s dear devotee, Vibhiṣaṇa, took birth as Ramachandra Puri. Radharani’s mother-in-law, Jaṭila, also entered into him for certain special purposes. On account of him, Mahaprabhu reduced his food consumption. (Gaura-gaṇoddesa-dīpikā 92-3)

\*taṁ vande kṛṣṇa-caitanyaṁ ramacandra-puri-bhayat |

\*laukikaharataḥ svaṁ yo bhikṣannaṁ samakocayat ||

+++I offer my prayers to Sri Krishna Chaitanya who out of fear of Ramachandra Puri reduced his eating in the eyes of the world. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.8.1)

## **Ramachandra Puri as counter-example**

Before discussing the character of Ramachandra Puri, we must remember that the lessons of his life are taught as counter-examples. Anyone who seeks the perfection of his own life should bear in mind that the following lessons are to

be learned from his actions:

(1) Faultfinding, especially finding fault in Vishnu and the Vaishnavas, is extremely detrimental to one's spiritual advancement. A devotional practitioner should look at his own faults rather than at others'. By correcting his own faults, he will be able to make some advancement. Anyone who sincerely seeks to achieve pure devotional service should always remember the following verse from Mahaprabhu's teachings to Rupa Goswami:

\*yadi vaiṣṇava aparadha uṭhe hati mata |

\*upaṛe va chiṇḍe tara sukhi jaya pata ||

+++If the maddened elephant of Vaishnava-aparadha enters the devotional garden, the creeper of bhakti will be uprooted and all its leaves will dry up. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.19.156)

(2) All the disciples who take initiation from the same guru are not to be considered equal. Though superficially all may have taken shelter of the spiritual master and received the mantra from him, they cannot all be considered true or sincere disciples. The spiritual master rewards the disciple who dedicates himself to affectionate service of the master; such a disciple is furthermore able to recognize the mercy of his spiritual master. A disciple seeking his own perfection will bear in mind that of the sixty-four limbs of devotional service, one of the most important is \*visrambhena guroḥ seva\*, <the service of the spiritual master in reverence and respect.> The sincere disciple recognizes that the spiritual master's instructions are beneficial both for himself and for others.

(3) To show disrespect to one's spiritual master and to other Vaishnavas has a pernicious effect on one's spiritual life. One should remember that <the Lord cannot tolerate the transgression of the rules of etiquette.> (Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.4.166). Due to whatever misfortune, some conditioned souls come under the influence of the illusory energy and are so bewildered by a pride in their own knowledge or self-worth that they arrogantly try to correct or to instruct the Vaishnava or the guru.

(4) Those who want to increase in devotion should associate with and serve other devotees who are affectionate and who have similar spiritual goals. The tendency to serve Vishnu and the Vaishnavas is increased by associating with those who possess this tendency in greater quantities.

(5) Because of his relation to the guru, the guru's godbrother is as worshipable as the guru himself. One must always show him the proper respect. Even if one thinks that his instructions are not correct, one should still maintain the outer decorum and not use direct critical speech with him. Mahaprabhu taught this kind of behavior by his own actions.

\*gorara ami, gorara ami mukhe balile nahi cale |

\*gorara acara gorara vicara la+ile phala phale ||

+++Just to repeat <I belong to Gaura, I belong to Gaura> is not in itself sufficient. One has to follow the practice and the teachings given by Gaura if one wishes to achieve the promised results. (Bhaktivinoda Thakur).

### **Ramachandra criticizes Jagadananda Pandit**

Ramachandra Puri's family background and birthplace are unknown. It is well known that he took initiation from Madhavendra Puri. Krishnadas Kaviraj Goswami has related the story of his relationship to his guru and to Mahaprabhu in the Antya-lila of Chaitanya Charitamrita. Because he was Madhavendra Puri's initiated disciple, both the Lord and Paramananda Puri showed him respect. Nevertheless, despite his relationship to the distinguished master, Ramachandra Puri associated closely with those who followed the path of dry knowledge and was attracted to doctrines opposed to those of pure devotional service.

One day, Jagadananda Pandit saw the Lord, Paramananda and Ramachandra paying obeisances to each other, embracing each other and engaging in conversation. He decided to invite the three of them to eat a meal together. He arranged for copious amounts of Jagannath prasada to be brought for them and fed them very well. When they had finished, Ramachandra Puri himself told Jagadananda to sit down and take prasada. He took special care of him, personally serving him with the Lord's remnants. After Jagadananda had finished eating, however, he criticized Mahaprabhu's followers saying:

+++<I had heard that Chaitanya's followers were big eaters. Now I have seen

with my own eyes that this is true. To feed a sannyasi excessively leads to the destruction of religious principles. A renunciate who eats this much will find that his vows will dissipate.> (Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.8.15-16)

## **How Ramachandra became a fault finder**

This propensity to find fault with others, to criticize and to give instructions in dry philosophy was the result of offenses Ramachandra Puri had committed at the feet of his spiritual master. When Madhavendra Puri was on his death bed in Remuna, he was in the depth of separation from Krishna and was crying in the mood of Radha after Krishna's departure for Mathura. He kept repeating the verse,

\*ayi dinadayardra natha he, mathuranatha kadavalokyase |

\*hṛdayam tvad-aloka-kataram dayita bhramyati kim karomy aham ||

+++<O lord, whose heart softens at seeing the condition of the unfortunate! Oh lord of Mathura, when will I see you? My heart is filled with pain from not seeing you, oh my love, and is confused. What can I do?>

Both Ishvara Puri and Ramachandra Puri were present at this time. Ramachandra had no understanding of his spiritual master's mood and treating him like an ordinary human being, arrogantly began to give him instruction. He said, "Remember that you are completely full of the bliss of Brahman. Why are you crying like this despite being knowledgeable of your own Brahma-nature?"

When Madhavendra Puri heard these words so full of ignorance and effrontery, he became angry and began to rebuke Ramachandra, saying,

+++<Get away from me, you most sinful rascal! I am dying from the distress of not having received Krishna's mercy, of not having attained Mathura, and you come to add to my misery! Don't show your face to me again, go wherever you like! If I see you while I am dying I will take a lower birth. I am dying from the distress of not having attained Krishna and this lowly fool is teaching me about

Brahman.> (Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.8.22-5)

As a result of his offenses, Madhavendra Puri withdrew his blessings from Ramachandra Puri who thenceforth started to develop material desires. He became a dry philosopher without any interest in Krishna. Not only that but he became critical of everyone, exclusively devoting himself to faultfinding.

In this connection, Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur has written, <Even though Ramachandra Puri saw his own guru suffering of separation from Krishna, he was incapable of recognizing the transcendental nature of this transport of emotions. He judged his guru to be an ordinary man and took his mood to be material, the result of some material insufficiency. As a result he tried to explain to him the value of experiencing the oneness of Brahman. Madhavendra Puri reacted to his disciple's stupidity and disregard for his instructions and thus stopped wishing for his well-being. He abandoned him and drove him away.>

On the other hand, Ishvara Puri not only adhered to his guru's teaching but served him physically and thus received his mercy, so becoming immersed in love of Krishna. <Ishvara Puri received his spiritual master's mercy, while Ramachandra Puri received his enmity. For the edification of the world, these two served as examples of the guru's blessings and his punishment.> (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.8.32)

### **Ramachandra Puri finds fault with the Lord himself**

Deprived of his spiritual master's blessings, Ramachandra Puri sought out sannyasis to find out what their activities were, how much they ate, etc., all for the sake of discovering their faults. Mahaprabhu had the habit of taking lunch on the invitation of his various devotees. If anyone was unable for whatever reason to invite the Lord to his house for a meal, he would give a donation of money to buy Jagannath prasada. The customary amount at that time was four paṇas or strings (320) of cowries.

Unable to appreciate the Lord's glories and thinking of him as an ordinary man,



Ramachandra Puri concerned himself with gathering all sorts of information about his lodgings, his habits, how much he ate and slept and his comings and goings. He was interested only in finding faults and finally he found one. He criticized those in the renounced order for eating sweetmeats, saying that it made it difficult to control the senses. Though his only goal was to find fault with the Lord, Ramachandra Puri nevertheless he came regularly to see him. When they met, the Lord would offer him respectful obeisances, considering him a godbrother of his spiritual master.

One day Ramachandra Puri came in the morning to Mahaprabhu's residence. Seeing many ants in the Lord's room, he began to criticize him, saying, <Last night there was molasses made from sugar cane in here. This is why there are so many ants. Alas, how sad to see such an attachment to sense gratification amongst those in the renounced order of life!> After saying this, he got up and left.

Though ants quite naturally roam about everywhere, Mahaprabhu became apprehensive as a result of his accusations. He called Govinda and instructed him to reduce his daily consumption of prasada to one-fourth of a pot and five gaṇḍas worth of vegetables. He warned him that if Govinda brought him more than this amount, he would leave Puri.

When the devotees heard about Mahaprabhu's reduction in prasada consumption, they were thunderstruck. They condemned Ramachandra Puri and themselves stopped eating. When Ramachandra Puri heard that Mahaprabhu and his devotees had all reduced the amount of food they were taking, he went to see him and impudently said:

+++A sannyasi is not supposed to gratify his senses. He should fill his belly with the bare minimum. I see that you have become thin. Indeed, I have heard that you have cut your eating in half. But this kind of dry renunciation is not the religion of a sannyasi, either. A sannyasi eats as much as is necessary to maintain his body, but without engaging in sense gratification. By so doing, he becomes perfect in the discipline of knowledge.>

\*natyasnato 'pi yogo 'sti na caikantam anasnataḥ |

\*na cati-svapna-silasya jagrato naiva carjuna ||

\*yuktahara-viharasya yukta-ceṣṭasya karmasu |

\*yukta-svapnavabodhasya yogo bhavati duḥkha-ha ||

+++O Arjuna, yoga practice is impossible for anyone who overeats, undereats, oversleeps, or undersleeps. For a person who eats, relaxes and exerts himself in all duties in a regulated way, and who keeps regular hours in proper measure, the practice of yoga brings about the end of all worldly suffering. (Bhagavad-gita 6.16-17)

Mahaprabhu continued to show Ramachandra Puri the same respect as before, however, and humbly submitted, <I am just like an ignorant boy and it is my great fortune that you treat me like your disciple and instruct me. I will do my best to follow your instructions.> Hearing this, Ramachandra Puri got up and left.

### **Paramananda Puri tries to intercede**

In the meantime, Paramananda Puri heard that all the devotees of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu were eating only half as much as usual. He and some other devotees approached the Lord with great humility and submission and said, <Ramachandra Puri is by nature a slanderer. It is not wise to give up eating on his say-so. It is his wont to make someone eat far more than he wants. Then he reproaches that person for overeating. Two kinds of activity, though rejected in the revealed scriptures, constitute the substance of his daily affairs:

\*para-svabhava-karmaṇi na prasamsen na garhayet

\*visvam ekatmakam pasyan prakṛtya puruṣeṇa ca

+++One should neither praise nor criticize the activities of others which result from their nature, because everything in the universe is a combination of the material nature and the living souls, and is thus one sole entity. (SB 11.28.1)

<Of the two rules, Ramachandra Puri obeys the first by abandoning praise, but although he knows that the second is more prominent, he neglects it by criticizing others.>

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur comments on this verse by saying, <The above-mentioned verse from Srimad Bhagavatam gives two injunctions. The first, called purva-vidhi, is that one should not praise, and the second, para-vidhi, is that one should not criticize. It is generally said that the rule which is given later takes precedence over previously given injunctions. From this we can understand that to praise someone is not so dangerous, while one should avoid calumny. Here, however, Ramachandra Puri observed the injunction to avoid praising others, but did not observe the prohibition against criticism. Thus he neglected the para-vidhi but strictly observed the purva-vidhi. This verse thus has an ironical meaning.>

Paramananda Puri continued: <Ramachandra Puri does not praise even a person who has hundreds of good qualities; he rather finds some way of calling these qualities a fault. You should not give up eating properly because of his criticism; you should rather accept invitations as before.>

Mahaprabhu replied, <There is no reason to get angry at Ramachandra Puri. A sannyasi should not be lusty after the pleasures of the tongue, but only eat in order to keep body and soul together.>

When the devotees continued to press the Lord to abandon his new principle, he would not do so. Finally, he responded to their request by accepting half of the original amount of prasada (rather than a quarter as he was then doing). Thus the cost for the food needed to invite him was fixed at two paṇas of cowries (160 conchshells), and that food would be taken by two men and sometimes three.

Krishnadas Kaviraj Goswami writes:

+++When a Brahmin at whose home an invitation could not be accepted invited the Lord, he would pay two paṇas of conchshells to purchase the prasada. When a Brahmin at whose home an invitation could be accepted invited him, the Brahmin would purchase part of the prasada and cook the rest at home. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.8.89-90)

## **Ramachandra leaves Puri**

If Gadadhara Pandit, Bhagavan Acharya or Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya invited the Lord on a day when he had already been invited to dine by someone else, he would break his previous engagement. Then he would eat as much as they served him.

Mahaprabhu sometimes treated Ramachandra Puri according to worldly etiquette, and sometimes he would ignore him as though he were of no more significance than straw. All the Lord's activities are auspicious and beautiful, in all times and circumstances.

++Sometimes the Lord acted almost like a servant to Ramachandra Puri. At other times, he treated him like straw. The Lord's activities are beyond human comprehension. Whatever he does, to whomever, is always enchanting. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.8.94-5)

Ramachandra Puri stayed in Jagannath Puri for a short while longer before leaving to visit various holy places of pilgrimage. When he left, the devotees felt extremely happy, as if a great load of stones had suddenly fallen from their heads to the ground. Mahaprabhu once again began to accept invitations as before and the devotees were able to serve him without hindrance.

Thus, if one commits an offense to one's spiritual master, that offense eventually arrives at the feet of the Supreme Personality of Godhead himself.

+++This is the result of being rejected by one's spiritual master. Eventually, the offense reaches as far as the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Even though the Lord did not consider the offenses of Ramachandra Puri, considering him to be a senior, he instructed through his behavior about the result of offending the spiritual master. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.8.99-100)

## **Mahaprabhu stays with Ramachandra Puri in Benares**

Vrindavan Das Thakur has also written that Mahaprabhu hid in the house of Ramachandra Puri while in Benares.

+++Mahaprabhu remained hidden for two months in Ramachandra Puri's maṭha. (Chaitanya Bhagavat 2.19.105)

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur writes in his Gauḍīya-bhaṣya, <Gaurasundara stayed in the house of Chandrasekhara while in Benares. Chandrasekhara was a sudra of the vaidya caste. Vrindavan Das Thakur says that he stayed with Ramachandra Puri, who is known as a pretentious disciple of Madhavendra Puri who had a strong preference for the Mayavada philosophy. He told people in Benares that he was staying with Ramachandra Puri while in fact he preferred to spend his time with devotees. Ramachandra Puri was a sannyasi in one of the ten Saṅkarite orders, therefore Mahaprabhu stayed with him to avoid criticism from the non-devotees.>

## Volume 2

### **Srila Lokanatha Goswami & Srila Bhugarbha Goswami**

lokanathakhya-gosvami sri-lila-manjari pura |

Lokanatha Goswami was known as Lila Manjari in Krishna lila. (Gaura-gaṇoddesa-dipika 187)

Lokanatha is considered to be Mahaprabhu's direct disciple and associate. Prior to coming to Nabadwip, he lived in the village of Talakhari in Jessore district in what is now Bangla Desh. Prior to that, he lived in Kacna Para. His father's name was Padmanabha Chakravarti and his mother Sita Devi. The Bhakti-

ratnakara quotes an old verse which confirms this:

srimad-radha-vinodaika-seva-sampat-samanvitam |

padmanabhatmajam srimal-lokanatha-prabhum bhaje ||

I worship Lokanatha Prabhu, the son of Padmanabha, whose life revolved around the wealth of service he possessed in his deity Radhavinoda. (Bhakti-ratnakara 1.297)

The descendants of Lokanatha's brother, Pragalbha Bhattacharya are still living in Talakhari. Bhugarbha Goswami was Lokanatha's closest friend and constant companion. He was Prema Manjari in Vraja (Gaura-ganoddesa-dipika 187).

bhugarbha-ṭhakkurasyasit purvakhya prema-manjari.

According to the Sadhana-dipika, Bhugarbha was Lokanatha's paternal uncle. The Sakha-nirṇayamṛta adds the following comments on Bhugarbha Goswami:

gosvaminam ca bhugarbham bhugarbhottham suvisrutam |

sada mahasayam vande kṛṣṇa-prema-pradam prabhum ||

srila-govinda-devasya seva-sukha-vilasinam |

dayalum premadam svaccham nityam ananda-vigraham ||

I offer my reverence to the illustrious Bhugarbha Prabhu, who is said to have been born from the bowels of the earth. He bestows love of Krishna; he takes pleasure in the service of Govinda Deva, is compassionate, simple and always joyful.

Bhugarbha Goswami's initiating guru was Gadadhara Pandit Goswami. He is therefore considered to be Gadadhara's branch. Sri Bhagavata Das, a fellow disciple of Srila Gadadhara Pandit Goswami, was also a close friend.

Bhugarbha and Bhagavata Das are branches of Gadadhara Pandit, both of whom went to live in Vrindavan. (Chaitanya Charitamrita Adi, 12.81)

## **Lokanatha and Bhugarbha go to Vraja**

Lokanatha Goswami renounced the householder asrama in 1431 of the Saka era (1510) and came to meet Mahaprabhu in Nabadwip. Mahaprabhu immediately told him to go and live in Vrindavan, telling him that it was his own intention to take sannyas very shortly and go there himself. Lokanatha started to cry when he imagined the Lord with his beautiful curls shorn and the distress the devotees would feel at his departure. When the Lord saw Lokanatha's anxiety, he embraced him and consoled him with various spiritual instructions and Lokanatha surrendered completely to him. When Bhugarbha saw how unhappy Lokanatha was, he decided to accompany him to Vrindavan. The two companions walked through Rajmahal, Tajpur, Purniya, Lukhnow and many holy places before finally arriving in Braj.

Though he had come to Vrindavan on Mahaprabhu's order, he constantly felt intense separation from the Lord, shedding copious tears in his desire to see him again. When he got the news that Mahaprabhu had taken sannyas and then gone to Puri and thence to the South on pilgrimage, Lokanatha hurried to Southern India in order to join him. When he arrived in the South, he heard that Mahaprabhu was no longer there, but had gone to Vrindavan. Lokanatha immediately set off for Vrindavan, hoping to see the Lord there, but by the time he arrived, he heard that the Lord was now in Prayag. Lokanatha was disappointed, but still determined to see the Lord and decided to set off again for Prayag.

This time, however, Mahaprabhu appeared to him in a dream and told him to stop running around and remain in Vrindavan and do his bhajana. Not long afterwards, Rupa, Sanatan, Gopal Bhatta Goswamis and others of the Lord's associates started coming to live in Braj. Their association cheered him immensely.

When Rupa was getting old and unable to walk all the way to Govardhana, he missed being able to see Gopal. When this desire became strong, Gopal came to stay at the house of Viṭṭhalesvara in Mathura, ostensibly out of fear of Muslim iconoclasts, but actually to show mercy to Rupa Goswami. The deity stayed

there for a month, during which time Rupa came for his darshan with Lokanatha and other Gaudiya Vaishnavas.

The extent to which Bhugarbha Goswami was dear to Lokanatha is described in Bhakti-ratnakara:

Lokanatha's affection for Bhugarbha was well known everywhere. They only had different bodies, in spirit they were one. (Bhakti-ratnakara 1.317)

Gopal Bhatta Goswami was extremely compassionate. Bhugarbha and Lokanatha are a goldmine of virtues. (Bhakti-ratnakara 6.510)

Lokanatha Goswami worshiped Radha and Krishna in a state of separation, increasing the intensity of his renunciation. He was afraid of the slightest amount of fame. Thus he forbade Krishnadas Kaviraj Goswami to write anything about him in the Chaitanya Charitamrita, with the result that only his name can be found mentioned there. Sanatan Goswami has also mentioned his name in the maṅgalacaraṇa to the Hari-bhakti-vilasa, as well as in that to the Vaishnava-toṣaṇi commentary to the tenth canto of the Srimad Bhagavatam.

vṛndavana-priyan vande sri-govinda-padasritan |

srimat-kasisvaraṁ lokanatham sri-kṛṣṇadasakam ||

I pay obeisance to Kashisvara, Lokanatha and Krishnadas, to whom residence in Vrindavan is very dear and who have taken shelter of Govinda's lotus feet.

## **Lokanatha and Radhavinoda**

Lokanatha Goswami constantly travelled through Braj, ecstatically visiting the various holy places where Krishna had engaged in his pastimes. Once, he came to Khadiravana. Then he visited Kisor Kund near the village of Umarao by Chatravana. He was so impressed by the beauty of the site that he stayed there for some time to do his bhajana in isolation. After being engaged in this way for



some time, he developed a deep desire to worship Radha and Krishna in the deity form.

The Lord knows the desires of his devotees and feels himself obliged to fulfill them. He came personally to give Lokanatha a deity, telling him that its name was Radhavinoda before disappearing. Lokanatha was astonished to see the deity and then filled with anxiety at the thought that the Lord himself had come and gone. But Radhavinoda cast his sweet glance on Lokanatha and said to him, “I live here on the banks of Kisorī Kund in the village of Umarao. I saw your eagerness to serve me and so I came here myself. Who else would have brought me to you? I am very hungry. Quickly prepare something for me to eat.”

When he heard these words, tears began to flow from Lokanatha’s eyes. He quickly started cooking for Radhavinoda and then made an offering which the deity ate with great satisfaction. He then made him a bed of flowers upon which he placed him, fanned him with branches and joyfully massaged his feet. Lokanatha devoted himself in body, mind and soul to Radhavinoda.

He wondered where he would keep the deity, and decided to make a large bag which became Radhavinoda’s temple. He kept his worshipable Lord constantly close to his heart like a necklace. This attracted the people of Braj to Lokanatha and they wanted to build a house for him and his deity, but he refused. He was so renounced that he accepted nothing other than what he absolutely needed for the deity’s service.

### **Narottama Das becomes Lokanatha’s disciple**

After spending some time at Kisorī Kuṇḍ, Lokanatha came to Vrindavan. He learned that Rupa and Sanatan had ended their pastimes in this world and lamented their passing in great sadness. At around this time, Narottama Das, who was the son of the Raja Kṛṣṇananda Datta of Gopalpura in Rajsahi (now in Bangla Desh), came to Vrindavan and met him there. When Mahāprabhu told Nityananda to go to Puri, he cried in ecstasy in a place on the banks of the Padmavati river which is now known as Prematila. He buried his love there for Narottama’s later benefit. Years later, when Narottama took his bath in the river

at that spot, he was immediately overcome with divine love and decided to cut off all family ties and go to Vrindavan.

Upon his arrival in Braj, Narottama met Rupa, Sanatan and Lokanatha. He received Lokanatha's special mercy, for he became his one and only disciple. Lokanatha was extremely renounced and had made a vow not to take any disciples. Narottama Das too made a vow — to take initiation from no one other than Lokanatha. Narottama repeatedly asked Lokanatha to give him initiation, but Lokanatha was firm in his refusal. In order to win his favor, Narottama went in the middle of the night to clean the place he used as a toilet. Lokanatha was so surprised to see that the place was being kept clean by someone that he became curious to find out who it was. One evening, he went and hid there, chanting japa the entire night in wait for the anonymous benefactor.

At midnight, he saw someone engaged in cleaning the place and asked him who he was. When he found out that Narottama, the son of a raja, was engaged in doing such a filthy task, he felt embarrassed and asked him what his purpose was in doing it. Narottama immediately began to cry. He fell at Lokanatha's feet and said, "My life is useless unless I obtain your mercy." When Lokanatha saw Narottama's humility and pain, his resolve to never give anyone initiation softened and gave him the mantras.

This is a perfect example of how one can win over the worshipable deity through honest and selfless service. Narottama Das took initiation from Lokanatha on the full moon day of the month of Shravan. Lokanatha and Narottama engaged in this pastime to show the value of selfless and sincere service to the entire world, but especially to the people of northern Bengal. Lokanatha was a very renounced Vaishnava, but he saw in Narottama someone who not only had a cultured background, but an enthusiasm and taste for dealing with people. As a result, he asked him to go back to his homeland to preach Krishna consciousness.

When one has taken full shelter of the Supreme Lord and is situated on the transcendental platform in full service to the Lord, then he usually has no enthusiasm for engaging in activities for the welfare of people on the bodily platform. When a devotee goes against this principle, such activities increase in prestige. On the order of his spiritual master, Narottama returned to northern Bengal and began to preach pure devotional service and thus delivered the people of that country.

In his collection of songs known as Prarthana, Narottama Das Thakur has written:

After suffering much sadness, O Lord, you brought me to Braj, pulling me by the rope of mercy which you had tied around my neck. Maya and fate forced me back into the well of material existence by cutting loose that rope of mercy.

Lokanatha Goswami left this world somewhere around 1510 Saka (1588-9 AD) in the month of Asharh, on the eighth day of the dark moon. His samadhi tomb is found in the Radha Gokulananda temple in Vrindavan. His Radhavinoda deity is also being served in the same temple.

## **Sri Subuddhi Raya**

Nothing is known about Subuddi Raya's birthplace or his parents. His life is memorable because he received Mahaprabhu's association and special blessings. In the first part of his life, he became the king of Gauḍadesa. [FN: According to Asutoṣa Deva's Bengali dictionary, Gauḍa was the name of the ancient capital of Bengal in Malda district, from which the entire Bengali kingdom took its name. On the other hand, Hari Das Das writes in his Gauḍiya Vaiṣṇava Abhidhana that, according to the Skanda Puraṇa, there were five Gauḍas, by which were meant the kingdoms of Sarasvata, Kanyakubja, Utkala (Orissa), Maithila, and Bengal, but that the name was primarily used for the region lying between East Bengal (Baṅga) and Mithila. Vijaya Sena of Karṇāṭaka came and became the king of Gauḍa and his descendants were known as Gauḍesvara. Vijaya Sena's son Ballala Sena established the city of Gauḍa on the banks of the Ganges. The course of the Ganges has since moved. Previously, all Bengalis were known as Gaudiyas, but the name has become synonymous with Vaishnavas who follow Chaitanya Mahaprabhu.]

Subuddhi Raya was born in a Brahmin family and was well-known for his scholarship. While he was king of Gauḍa, Hussein Shah was his protigi. Previously, Subuddhi was the master of Bengal and Hussein Khan Sayyid worked for him. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.25.180).

Subuddhi put Hussein Khan in charge of digging a big tank, but because of mistakes made by the latter, punished him by having him whipped. Subsequently, Hussein Khan himself became the king of Gauḍa. Nevertheless, because of the help which Subuddhi had given him in the past, continued to treat him with a great deal of respect. The scars of the flogging he had received from Subuddhi remained on his body, however, and one day Hussein Shah's queen asked where they came from. When the King told his wife the story, she became angry and incited her husband to punish Subuddhi by putting him to death. Hussein Shah refused to go to such extremes, and so his wife suggested that he punish him by bringing about his caste falldown. The King refused to do this because he knew that doing so would be tantamount to killing him. His wife insisted, however, even threatening to kill herself if he did not do something. Finally, he was obliged to give in to his wife and he gave water to Subuddhi to drink, which according to the Hindu rules of the time meant that he lost his caste status.

Even prior to these events Subuddhi had become completely detached from material life. He took this opportunity to leave his home and family and go to live in Varāṇasi. There he inquired from the Smarta Brahmanas how to go about atoning for the loss of caste status. They told him that he should commit suicide by drinking boiling ghee. In the Gauḍiya Vaiṣṇava Abhidhana, it is said that it was common to be told to atone by jumping into a fire of chaff, i.e., a fire which is not easily extinguished. Others, however, objected that such a heavy punishment did not fit the minor nature of the offense. As a result of this difference of opinion amongst the Brahmins, Subuddhi Raya hesitated.

When Mahāprabhu came to Varāṇasi, Subuddhi came to see him and recounted the whole story from beginning to end. The Lord recommended to him that he go to Vrindavan and chant the names of Krishna. The Lord said, <Leave here and go to Vrindavan. Chant the holy names of Krishna constantly. The shadow of the Name will destroy any sins you may have committed. If you go on chanting, you will attain Krishna's lotus feet. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.25.191-3)

On the Lord's order, Subuddhi Raya set off for Vrindavan, stopping in Prayag, Ayodhya and Naimiṣaraṇya, where he stayed for some time. When he finally arrived in Mathura, he learned that the Lord had already left for Prayag and that he had thus missed him. In distress and separation, Subuddhi became very

renounced. He made his living by gather dry wood from the jungle and selling it in Mathura. He subsisted on the little money that he made from this work, eating only dried chick peas to keep body and soul together. Even so, he was able to put some money aside which he used for serving the Bengali Vaishnavas, feeding them with rice and yogurt.

Subuddhi Raya gathered dry wood and sold it in Mathura, receiving five or six paisa for each load. He spent only one paisa for food, eating dried chick peas. The rest of the money was kept with a businessman. Whenever he saw Vaishnavas in distress, he would feed them and when Gaudiya Vaishnavas arrived in town, he would provide them with rice, yogurt and mustard oil for rubbing on the body. (Chaitanya Charitamrita Madhya 25.197-9)

Rupa Goswami was extremely happy when he saw Subuddhi Raya's renunciation and service to the Vaishnavas. Subuddhi took Rupa with him to visit all the holy sites in Vraja-maṇḍala. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.25.200) It is clear from this that service to the Vaishnavas is not restricted to the very rich. Even a poor person will find the means to serve Vishnu and the Vaishnavas if he has a sincere desire to do so. By the will of the Lord, he will never have any shortage. This is the example set by Subuddhi Raya's holy life.

When Sanatan Goswami was walking from Varanasi to Mathura, he took the main road from Prayag on the Lord's order. In the meantime, Rupa and Anupama had taken the road along the banks of the Ganges in order to meet Mahaprabhu in Prayag. When Sanatan met Subuddhi in Mathura, he learned from him that he had missed Rupa and Anupama. Subuddhi showed a great deal of affection for Sanatan as he had known him in his previous life as a government minister. He wanted to serve him, but Sanatan did not wish to accept his service.

Subuddhi Raya spent the rest of his life in Vrindavan worshiping the Lord by chanting the Holy Names in great renunciation. In this way he followed the order of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. The date of his death is unknown.

## **Sri Rupa Goswami**

sri-rupa-manjari khyata yasid vṛndavane pura |

sadya rupakhya-gosvami bhutva prakāṣatam iyat ||

She who was known in Vrindavan as Rupa Manjari has now appeared as Rupa Goswami. (Gaura-gaṇoddesa-dipika 180)

Lalita is chief amongst the sakhis who make up Radharani's entourage, and Rupa Manjari is the foremost amongst those sakhis who follow Lalita. It is for this reason that in the Gaura-lila, Rupa Goswami is the chief amongst the six Goswamis.

### **Rupa Goswami's family tree**

In the new Bengali dictionary edited by Ashutosh Deb, Rupa Goswami's dates are given as 1489 to 1558 AD, or 1410-1479 of the Saka era. In his earthly pastimes, Rupa was born in a Brahmin family of the Bharadvaja gotra which hailed from Karṇāṭaka, where they had been rajas. His father's name was Kumara Deva. His mother's name is not known. Narahari Chakravarti Thakur has given the names of seven generations of his family in Bhakti-ratnakara (1.540-568).

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur has summarized this family history in his Anubhaṣya: "Jagad-guru Sarvajna was a great soul who was born in a Brahmin raja family of the Bharadvaja gotra in the 12th century of the Saka era. His son Aniruddha had two sons named Rupesvara and Harihara, neither of whom inherited the land holdings. The older brother Rupesvara went to live in the mountains and his son Padmanabha moved to Bengal, taking up residence in the village of Naihaṭi on the banks of the Ganges. Padmanabha had five sons, the youngest of which was named Mukunda who fathered the pious Kumaradeva. Kumaradeva had several sons, amongst whom were Sanatan, Rupa and Anupama. Kumaradeva's house was in the village of Bakla in Candradvipa.<sup>1149</sup>Candradvipa was the ancient name of a kingdom which now

lies in Bangla Desh. It contained Faridpur, Bakhar Ganj and the southern parts of Dhaka and Pabna districts.<sup>1149</sup> His house was in the village of Fateyabad in the Jessore district of that time. Three of his sons became Vaishnavas. These three brothers left the Fateyabad home to live in Ramakeli for their work. Jiva Goswami was born there. As a result of their service to the Nawab, all three of them were awarded the Mallik title. Mahaprabhu met Anupama for the first time when he came to Ramakeli. When Rupa Goswami abandoned his government duties to go to Vrindavan, he was accompanied by Anupama, who was also known as Vallabha.” (Chaitanya Charitamrita 1.10.84 Anubhasya)

### **Rupa’s first meeting with the Lord**

Mahaprabhu met Rupa and Sanatan Goswami for the first time beneath kadamba and tamal trees in Ramakeli village. Rupa Goswami had had a large tank excavated there which still exists, named Rupa-sagara. The three brothers were engaged in the service of the contemporary king of Gauḍa, Hussein Shah. Sanatan Goswami was his chief minister with the title Sakara Mallik, while Rupa Goswami was also an important minister with the title Dabir Khas. We have indication of this from the Chaitanya Charitamrita, where the Shah addresses him with this title.

When Mahaprabhu was travelling through Gauḍa on his way to Vrindavan, he arrived at Ramakeli surrounded by countless Hindus. With some concern, the Shah summoned Rupa Goswami to ask him who Mahaprabhu was. Rupa Goswami glorified Mahaprabhu in such a diplomatic way that the Shah’s mind was put at ease.

The king made private inquiries from Dabir Khas, who told him of Mahaprabhu’s glories. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.1.175)

Vrindavan Das Thakur also confirms definitively that Rupa was named Dabir Khas and Sanatan, Sakar Mallik.

In the Seṣa-khaṇḍa [of the Chaitanya Bhagavat], the Lord revealed himself to Dabir Khas and recognizing their greatness, released them from their bondage.

He then named them Rupa and Sanatan. (Chaitanya Bhagavat 1.2.171-2)

Then, two great fortunate souls came to the spot where the Lord was. The two brothers were named Sakar Mallik and Rupa. The Lord looked upon them with compassionate eyes. (Chaitanya Bhagavat 3.9.238-9)

Rupa and Sanatan were eternal participants in Krishna-lila. When it came time for them to make their contribution to Gaura-lila, Mahaprabhu and his associates arrived in their home village. While within the material nature, the Lord and his devotees make an effort to keep their transcendental natures hidden to facilitate spreading their teachings to the people in this world; however, when they come close to one other they cannot help but reveal this nature. Thus, as soon as Rupa and Sanatan saw Mahaprabhu, though they were naturally attracted to him, they behaved in the manner of conditioned souls in order to show the people of this world how to act.

When the Badshah heard that Mahaprabhu had come to Ramakeli with a company of thousands of Hindus, he was frightened and suspected Mahaprabhu of a political purpose. A certain Keshava Khatri who knew about the Lord explained to the Shah, “He is just a sannyasi, a beggar who is out on pilgrimage. A few people are accompanying him, but there is no need to be alarmed.” The Shah also consulted Rupa Goswami, who told him of Mahaprabhu’s glories and succeeded in calming his fears.

Being desirous of meeting the Lord themselves, Rupa and Sanatan left the palace in the middle of the night and came to Ramakeli. They first encountered Nityananda and Hari Das Thakur, who brought the two brothers into the presence of the Lord. Rupa and Sanatan placed some grass in their mouths and wrapped their cloths around their necks as a sign of humility. They fell down at the Lord’s lotus feet and, with tears in their eyes, made the following humble submission:

“We are millions of times more degraded, fallen and sinful than Jagai and Madhai. We are of wicked birth because we are the servants of Muslims and our activities are exactly like those of the Muslims. We constantly associate with people who are inimical toward the cows and Brahmins. Due to our abominable activities we are now bound by the neck and hands and have been thrown into a ditch filled with the excrement of evil sense enjoyment.” (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.1.196-199)



When the Lord heard the extreme humility of the two brothers, he became compassionate. Even so, from his response to their statement, it is clear that they were not ordinary conditioned souls, but his eternal associates.

“I really had no need to come to Bengal, but I came anyway just to see the two of you. No one knows my purpose and so people ask me why I have come to this village of Ramakeli. I am very glad that you have come to see me. Now you can go home; do not fear anything. You have been my servants in life after life, so Krishna will deliver you very soon.” After saying this, the Lord placed his hands on the heads of Rupa and Sanatan, and they immediately took the Lord’s lotus feet and placed them on their heads.(Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.1.212-6)

The Lord wished to teach that the conditioned soul is delivered by the mercy of the devotees, so he asked Nityananda, Hari Das, Srivasa, Gadadhara, Mukunda, Jagadananda, Murari, Vakresvara and other of his associates to bless the two brothers.

Sanatan Prabhu then advised Mahaprabhu, “Dear Lord, you are going to Vrindavan with an entourage of hundreds and thousands of people, and this is not a fitting way to go on a pilgrimage.” (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.1.224) As a result of this advice, Mahaprabhu put off going to Vrindavan and turned back after going a little further, as far as Kanair Natshala.

### **Rupa resigns from the Shah’s service**

From this meeting at Ramakeli, it is evident that Mahaprabhu intended to teach the people of this world through Rupa and Sanatan. Not long afterward, an intense spirit of renunciation awakened in the two brothers and they started looking for a way to extricate themselves from their entanglement in the service of the Shah. They paid two Brahmins a large sum of money to perform a purascarana of the Krishna mantra on their behalf.<sup>11510</sup> According to the Hari-bhakti-vilasa (17.11), a purascarana is a ritual performance which consists of worshiping the Deity, chanting the mantra, offering oblations, performing a fire

sacrifice, and feeding the brahmaṇas every morning, noon and evening for a fixed period of time. Such performances are not necessary for the mahamantra of Holy Name, for by even uttering the holy name once one obtains all the results to be obtained from purascaraṇa.11510

Srila Rupa Goswami finally resigned from his government service and on behalf of his older brother, he deposited 10,000 coins with a grocer in the capital, Gauḍa. Then he took the rest of their accumulated wealth with him in two boats to Bakla Candradvipa where he divided it up, giving half to the Vaishnavas and a quarter for the maintenance of his family, while setting the rest aside with a trustworthy Brahmin against future necessity. Then he sent two people to Puri to find out when Mahaprabhu intended to travel to Vrindavan taking the route through the jungle. In the meantime, Sanatan Goswami had stopped his functions in the court of the Shah. Though he claimed to be ill, he was in fact engaged in an intense study of the Bhagavat with a group of Sanskrit scholars. The Shah first sent a doctor to examine Sanatan and then, upon learning the truth of the matter, came himself to exhort him to return to work. When Sanatan showed a continued reluctance to engage in his duties, the Shah had him put in prison. He then departed to invade Orissa.

### **Rupa meets Mahaprabhu in Prayag**

When Rupa received the news from his two messengers that Mahaprabhu had left for Vrindavan, he and Anupama left Bakla to try to join him. He sent a letter to Sanatan to let him know of their intentions, telling him to take any necessary steps to free himself and then to come and join them. When Rupa arrived in Prayag, he learned that Mahaprabhu was there at the house of a South Indian Brahmin. When Rupa found him there, he was overwhelmed with feelings of love for the Lord. He and Anupama put straw between their teeth and repeatedly paid their prostrated obeisances to the Lord, chanting various verses of praise and humility. The Lord felt great affection for the two brothers and said, “Krishna’s mercy is beyond description, for he has delivered you from the blind well of sensual existence.”

Mahaprabhu recited verses which stated that a devotee from a family of

dog-eaters is dearer to the Lord than even a Brahmin who knows the four Vedas, and that a devotee of the Lord is as worshipable as the Lord himself. Then he showed his mercy to them by embracing them, and then by placing his lotus feet on their heads. The two brothers folded their hands and chanted the following verse to show their gratitude to the Lord for his mercy toward them:

namo mahavadanyaya kṛṣṇa-prema-pradaya te |  
kṛṣṇaya kṛṣṇa-caitanya-namne gaura-tviṣe namaḥ ||

I offer salutations to you  
who are the most merciful incarnation;  
you who give love for Krishna,  
you who are Krishna,  
who are named Krishna Chaitanya,  
and whose skin is the color of gold. (LBhag, 1.1)

Mahaprabhu heard from Rupa Goswami that his brother Sanatan had been made prisoner by the Shah, but predicted that it would not be long before Sanatan escaped and met him. The South Indian Brahmin invited the two brothers to also stay with him and that day they ate Mahaprabhu's remnants.

## **Meeting with Vallabha Bhatta**

Meanwhile, news of Mahaprabhu's arrival in Prayag crossed the Ganges to the village of Aṛail where Vallabha Bhatta made his home. When Vallabha heard that the Lord had come, he immediately rushed to Prayag to meet him and fell to

the ground in obeisance to him. Mahaprabhu embraced him and then the two engaged in conversation about Krishna. Vallabha Bhatta was astonished to see the ecstatic reactions of the Lord in the course of their discussions.

As soon as Rupa and Anupama saw Vallabha Bhatta, they paid obeisances to him from a distance out of humility. When he came forward to touch them, they both reacted by saying, “We are lowly untouchables. You should not contaminate yourself by touching us.” They then sat down at a certain distance.

Mahaprabhu was pleased by their display of humility, while Vallabha Bhatta was impressed. The Lord said to Bhatta, “You are an older, aristocratic Brahmin, while these two belong to a low caste. You should certainly not touch them.” Vallabha Bhatta was able to divine that there was some hidden meaning to the Lord’s utterance and he asked how they could be considered of a low caste when they chanted the name of Krishna.

Vallabha then invited the Lord and his entourage to come to his house to take prasada, Mahaprabhu was happy to accept. They embarked on a boat, but as they crossed the confluence of the Yamuna and the Ganga, Mahaprabhu was affected by the sight of the black waters of the Yamuna and began to dance ecstatically in the boat, causing everyone on board a great deal of anxiety and fear. Finally, Mahaprabhu jumped into the Yamuna’s waters and had to be helped on board again by all the devotees.

Vallabha Bhatta took the Lord to his house, washed his feet and then sprinkled this water on his own head. Then he performed an elaborate puja of the Lord with a variety of ingredients. Then he fed him with a great feast of numerous preparations, satisfying Rupa and Anupama with the Lord’s remnants. He gave the Lord a mouth purifier and then a place to rest. When the Lord lay down, he sat beside him and served him by massaging his feet. In this way, Vallabha Bhatta considered himself to have attained the highest good fortune. The Lord told Vallabha to take something to eat himself.

During this time, Raghupati Upadhyaya, a Brahmin from Tirhut arrived there. The Lord was ecstatic to hear the devotional verses which this Raghupati had composed. Mahaprabhu asked him to say what was the Supreme Lord’s superlative form, abode, age and last of all, what was the supreme worshipable object. Raghupati answered:

syamam eva param rupam  
puri madhu-puri vara |  
vayah kaisorakam dhyeyam  
adya eva paro rasah ||

The form of Shyamasundar is the supreme form,  
the city of Mathura is the supreme abode,  
Lord Krishna's adolescence should always be meditated upon,  
and the primary sentiment is supreme amongst the rasas. (Pv, 82)

Mahaprabhu was very pleased with this answer and embraced Raghupati Upadhyaya. All the inhabitants of the village became devotees of Krishna upon seeing Mahaprabhu. Vallabha Bhatta again took the Lord back to Prayag by boat.

### **Mahaprabhu instructs Rupa**

Afraid of attracting crowds, Mahaprabhu stayed only ten days in Prayag, remaining incognito at the Dasasvamedha Ghat, where he instructed Rupa Goswami in Vaishnava dogma, explaining to him about the nature of Lord Krishna, devotion to him and sacred rapture.

The Lord taught Rupa the truths about Krishna, devotion to him, and sacred aesthetics, as well as the conclusions of the Bhagavat. He compassionately infused all the teachings he had heard from Ramananda Raya into Rupa. The Lord transferred his power into the heart of Rupa and made him expert in explaining all these teachings. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.19.105-7)

The teachings Mahaprabhu gave Rupa Goswami are known as Sri-rupa-sikṣa. Shivananda Sena's son, Kavi Karṇapura, has described this event extensively in his Chaitanya-candrodaya-nāṭaka:

kalena vṛndavana-keli-varta

lupteti taṁ khyapayitum viśiṣya |

kṛpamṛtenabhiṣiṣeca devas

tatraiva rupaṁ ca sanatanam ca || (Chaitanya Charitamrita 9.38)

In the course of time,

tidings of Krishna's amusements in Vrindavan had been lost.

To make them known again in detail

the Lord drenched Rupa and Sanatan with his mercy

in the very land of Vrindavan.

priya-svarupe dayita-svarupe

prema-svarupe sahajabhirupe |

nijanurupe prabhur eka-rupe

tatana rupe svavilasarupe ||

The Lord explained the rasa-sastra to Rupa Goswami,

in a way he did no other person, for Rupa was

the dear friend of Svarupa Damodar,

his true identity was that of the Lord's beloved,

his nature was identical with love,

and he was also possessed of natural physical beauty.

Mahaprabhu knew him to be like unto himself,

and indeed, he was verily the expansion of the Lord. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 9.39)

### **Sri-Rupa-sikṣa**

Through Rupa Goswami, Mahaprabhu taught the world about Krishna's Vrindavan pastimes and the process for attaining Krishna in Vrindavan. Krishnadas Kaviraj Goswami writes, "Through the mercy of Sanatan I have learned the devotional doctrines, while by the grace of Rupa I have been able to discover the extensiveness of the divine aesthetics of devotion." (Chaitanya Charitamrita 1.5.203)

The Lord taught about sacred rapture and Vraja's pastimes of love through Rupa Goswami. Who can effectively describe the subtleties of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's lila? (Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.5.87)

vṛndavaniyam rasa-kelivartam  
kalena luptam nija-saktim utkaḥ |  
sancarya rupe vyatanot punaḥ sa  
prabhor vidhau prag iva loka-sṛṣṭim ||

Just as the Lord enlightened the heart of Lord Brahma with the details of the creation and thus made the manifestation of the cosmos possible, so did Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu eagerly impregnate the heart of Rupa Goswami with spiritual potency so that he could revive Krishna's Vrindavan pastimes which had almost been lost to memory. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.19.1)

While in Prayag, Mahaprabhu gave Rupa the direct order to write Bhakti-rasamṛta-sindhu. This has been stated by Rupa himself in the introductory verses to that book:

hr̥di yasya preraṇaya pravartito'haṁ varaka-rupo' pi |  
tasya hareḥ pada-kamalaṁ vande caitanya-devasya ||

I worship the lotus feet  
of the Supreme Personality of Godhead,  
known as Lord Chaitanya-deva,  
for by his inspiration I have set out to write this book  
even though I am nothing but a ignorant wretch. (Brs 1.1.2)

Particularly relevant in this connection is Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur's commentary on the importance of studying and writing books as an element of devotional practice: "The lives of the Goswamis were exemplary in their renunciation. Sometimes they would engage in chanting the holy names of the Lord, sometimes they would worship him by writing books on divine aesthetics, and sometimes they would remember or glorify Lord Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. There is an idea which has some currency amongst the prakṛta-sahajiyas that devotional practice entails the renunciation of studying and writing devotional scriptures, indeed that any kind of scriptural study should be stopped so that one can attain to a state of ignorance. Those who follow in the footsteps of Rupa Goswami have no patience with such ideas. However, if a devotional practitioner studies or writes devotional scriptures for the sake of making money through which to satisfy his material senses or attain material fame, respect or any of the other insignificant and superficial goals which are classed as distractions or weeds in the garden of devotional service, then he will not attain the auspicious results which are the real fruit such activity. A real Rupanuga has no fruitive ambition for such petty results." (Anubhaṣya, 2.19.131)

When Mahaprabhu was giving Rupa the outline for his book on sacred



rapture, he described the characteristics of the different mellows and showed him how to get a taste of the fathomless ocean of sacred rapture, he pointed out how difficult it was to attain devotional service to Krishna. The jiva or living entity is an atomic spark of conscious energy. There are countless jivas, who are divided into two categories--those which are mobile and those which are stationary. Those which have mobility are again divided into three: those which move on the land, in the air or in the water. Amongst those who live on the land, a small number are human beings, of which only a minority accept the Vedic principles. Outcastes such as Pulindas, Mlecchas, Savaras and Buddhists are in the majority. Of those who accept the Vedas, some do so in name only and engage in sinful activity. Those who practice the Vedic principles are in the minority. Those who are engaged in religious practices toward some fruitive end form the majority in this group.

Amongst millions of such karma-niṣṭha followers of the Veda, one person may perhaps attain the level of spiritual knowledge; yet only one of many millions of such jnanis will be an actual liberated soul. And out of millions of liberated souls, it will still be difficult to find a devotee of Krishna. Devotion to Krishna which is thus so rare can take birth when a certain merit is attained through great good fortune.

The seed to the devotional creeper comes through the mercy of the Lord and his devotee. The creeper of spontaneous ecstatic devotion does not flower anywhere within this world, not even in Vaikuntha in the spiritual world, but only in Vṛndavan at Krishna's lotus feet. Krishna's feet are like the wish-fulfilling tree around which the vine of devotion wraps itself and bears fruit. This is described in a most clear and wonderful manner by Krishnadas Kaviraj Goswami in Chaitanya Charitamrita:

After wandering through this entire universe, birth after birth, some fortunate souls receive the seed of devotion (bhakti-lata-bija) by the mercy of Krishna and the guru. Upon receiving the seed of devotional service, one should take care of it by becoming a gardener and sowing it in his heart. If he waters the seed gradually by the process of sravaṇa and kīrtan [hearing and chanting], the seed will begin to sprout. As one waters the bhakti-lata-bija, the seed sprouts, and the creeper gradually increases to the point where it penetrates the walls of this universe and goes beyond the Virajā River between the spiritual world and the material world. It passes through the Brahma-loka, the Brahman effulgence until it finally reaches the spiritual sky and the spiritual planet Goloka Vṛndavan

where it takes shelter of the desire tree of the lotus feet of Krishna. There the creeper expands greatly and produces the fruit of love for Krishna, while the gardener continues to regularly sprinkle the creeper with the water of hearing and chanting here in the material world.

An offense to the Vaishnavas is like a mad elephant that uproots or breaks the creeper, causing its leaves to dry up. The gardener must therefore take care to protect the creeper by making a fence around it so that the elephant of offenses may not enter. Even so, unwanted creepers, such as the weeds of desire for material enjoyment or release from the world, may grow along with the creeper of devotional service. Such weeds are countless in their variety. Some examples are forbidden activity, faultfinding and duplicity, causing suffering to other creatures, seeking wealth, adulation or mundane importance. All these weeds grow alongside the main creeper as one waters it, causing its growth to be curtailed. As soon the devotee sees one of these weeds growing beside the original creeper, he must cut it down instantly. Then the real bhakti-lata can grow nicely all the way to Vrindavan where it will find shelter under the lotus feet of Krishna. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.19.151-61)

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur has commented on this passage in his Anubhaṣya: “Through the act of watering the creeper of devotional service by hearing and chanting, weeds may also grow which results in the growth of the bhakti-lata being stifled. If one does not avoid bad association, which is the only way to be free of offenses while hearing and chanting, then one becomes attached to sense gratification, the idea of liberation from material bondage, various mystic achievements, or the practice of deception. One may also become addicted to the illicit association of women or practice other false manifestations of devotion practiced by the prakṛta-sahajiyas or a dweller of the five places given by Parikṣit to Kali, namely wherever there is gambling, intoxication, prostitution, animal slaughter and the accumulation of gold. He starts to take the Vaishnavas to be members of a particular race or caste, he finds dishonest ways of collecting money, or makes a show of practicing spiritual life in seclusion while secretly harboring desires for fame and adulation. Or one’s desire for mundane reputation may result in his making compromises with nondevotees, compromising one’s philosophy or spiritual life, or becoming a supporter of the hereditary caste system by professing discipleship to a so-called guru who opposes Vishnu and the Vaishnavas. The sum and substance of these aberrant paths is that one becomes intoxicated in the gratification of one’s own senses and, in order to attain these superficial and destructible ends, in

short, anything besides pure devotion, one presents oneself as a great saintly person or as a religious person in order to accumulate followers. None of these things is useful in attaining pure devotional service to Krishna.

“If one uproots the various weeds as soon as one sees them beginning to sprout, then the creeper of devotional service will be able to grow as far as Goloka Vrindavan where it will give forth transcendental fruits. If not, one will end up being cut off from the devotional life and, remaining in the material world, whether in the higher or lower planets, will have to suffer its vagaries.” (Anubhāṣya, 2.19.160-1)

There are twelve devotional sentiments. The five primary sentiments are those of peacefulness, servitude, friendship, parenthood, and erotic love. The seven secondary sentiments are humor, astonishment, heroism, compassion, anger, disgust and fear.

The five primary sentiments remain permanently within the devotee’s heart, while the secondary sentiments are adventitious, appearing only when there is cause. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.19.188)

The secondary rasas act as supporting elements for the primary sentiments, coming and going when propitious circumstances arise. After serving their function, they again disappear, whereas the primary sentiments are permanently ensconced in the devotee’s heart. In his teachings to Rupa Goswami, Mahāprabhu established that of the five primary rasas, the divine sentiment of conjugal love is foremost. The characteristics of santa-rasa abandonment of other desires and steady attachment to Krishna. Over and above these characteristics, the possessor of the serving mood has his service, the friend has an intimacy, while the parent has a sense of being the protector. The devotee in madhura-rasa has all these qualities with the addition of serving with her own body. Just as all the qualities of the other elements starting with the ether are added together to be united in earth, so are all the qualities of the other devotional moods united in the mood of erotic love. Since all the sentiments are present in madhura-rasa, it is the best.

**Rupa starts writing his plays**

After the Lord had instructed Rupa for ten days at Prayag, he prepared to leave for Benares. Rupa was eager to accompany him, but the Lord instructed him to go on to Vrindavan and that he could take the road through Bengal at some later date to see him in Puri. In keeping with the Lord's order, Rupa Goswami continued on to Vrindavan and stayed there for one month. Then, he and Anupama set off in search of Sanatan, hoping to meet him somewhere along the Ganges. However, by the time they reached Prayag, Sanatan had already left for Mathura by the main highway, so their paths did not cross. When he arrived in Mathura, Sanatan was able to learn of Rupa's adventures from Subuddhi Raya.

As the two brothers were travelling along the banks of the Ganges toward Bengal, Anupama departed for the eternal abode of Ramachandra. Because of Anupama's death, Rupa Goswami was not able to join the other Bengali Vaishnavas in their annual pilgrimage to Puri, arriving there much later.

While in Vrindavan, Rupa had commenced writing a play on Krishna-lila, and had composed several verses of the introductory portion, known as the nandi. The nandi includes the obeisances, the blessing and the indication of the play's subject matter. Travelling through Orissa on his way to Puri, he stopped overnight in a village named Satyabhamapura. There he had a dream in which Satyabhama appeared to him and told him to write a separate play in her honor.

The morning after, Rupa Goswami said to himself, "Satyabhama has ordered me to write a play for her. I had started to write a play which described events from both Vraja and Dvaraka, but now I shall do them separately. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.1.43-4)

Once in Puri, Rupa would not go into the Jagannath temple to take darshan of Lord Jagannath. This was because of his great humility. In fact, though there was no impediment to his going there, he would not even enter Kashi Mishra's house to visit Mahaprabhu out of the same sense of being fallen. Though he had been born into a very respectable Brahmin family, he considered himself to be a mleccha due to his long association with the Muslim rulers of Bengal. Therefore, he preferred to stay with Hari Das Thakur at Siddha Bakula. Mahaprabhu himself respected Rupa's decision and never told him to go to see Jagannath, for

he wished to teach the world humility through Rupa Goswami's example.

Through Hari Das Thakur, the Lord taught forbearance. Through Rupa and Sanatan, he taught humility. (Bhakti-ratnakara 1.631)

When Mahaprabhu suddenly came one day to visit Hari Das, he was attracted by Rupa's humble, pure devotional attitude and embraced him. The Lord then sat down with him and asked him for the latest news about him and Sanatan and they talked about these and other things. On another day, Mahaprabhu came there with all of his entourage and Rupa paid obeisances to all of them.

Mahaprabhu, out of affection for Rupa, had Advaita and Nityananda Prabhus give him their blessings. Every single day, Mahaprabhu had Govinda bring Rupa and Hari Das the remnants of his prasada.

One day, the Lord suddenly said to Rupa, "Never make Krishna leave Vraja. Krishna never abandons Vrindavan to go elsewhere." (Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.1.66) As a result of this hint from the Lord, Rupa understood that both Satyabhama and Mahaprabhu wanted two different dramas, so he composed Vidagdha-Madhava exclusively about Krishna's pastimes in Vraja, and Lalita-Madhava about the Dvaraka-lila.

### **The Lord appreciates Rupa's poetry**

By Mahaprabhu's mercy, Rupa Goswami was able to understand his inner emotional state. During the Rathayatra, the Lord stood before Jagannath's chariot gazing upon the Lord in the mood of Radha, and began to recite a verse from the Kavya-prakasa. The verse, though seemingly having nothing to do with Krishna, put him in an ecstatic mood and he began to dance. Other than Sri Svarupa Damodar Goswami, no one was able to understand the meaning of the verse. Rupa Goswami, however, also had an insight into the Lord's mood and he composed an original verse which expressed this sentiment. He wrote the verse down on a palm leaf and tucked it into the thatched roof of Hari Das's cottage. Then he went to take his bath in the ocean.

In the meantime, Mahaprabhu came by and found the palm leaf and saw

the verse written upon it. He was astonished to see that Rupa had had such a clear intuition into his innermost feelings.

priyaḥ so'yaṁ kṛṣṇaḥ saḥacari kurukṣetra-militas  
tathāhaṁ sa radha tad idam ubhayoḥ saṅgama-sukham |  
tathapy antaḥ-khelan-madhura-murali-pancama-juṣe  
mano me kalindi-pulina-vipinaya spr̥hayati ||

O companion! This is the same beloved Krishna  
meeting me here in Kurukṣetra;  
and I am the same Radha,  
and both of us are feeling the joy of union.  
Even so, my mind wishes for the forest  
by the banks of the Yamuna  
where the fifth note of his flute  
reverberated sweetly within my heart. (Padyavali, 383)

When Rupa returned from bathing, Mahāprabhu gave him an affectionate slap, saying, “How did you know what was in my mind?” Then he embraced him tightly.

The Lord took the verse and showed it to Svarupa Damodar, asking him to examine it for any possible faults. He asked him, “How was Rupa able to know my mind?” Svarupa answered, “I believe it must be the result of your special benediction.” (Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.1.85-6)

One day, Rupa Goswami was busy writing Vidagdha Madhava. Mahaprabhu arrived unexpectedly and was impressed by his beautiful handwriting, comparing it to a string of pearls. He read the verse which Rupa had just finished composing, which was a glorification of the Holy Name:

tunḍe taṇḍavini ratim vitanute taṇḍavali-labdhaye  
karṇa-kroḍa-kaḍambini ghaṭayate karṇarbudebhyaḥ sprham |  
cetaḥ-praṅgaṇa-saṅgini vijayate sarvendriyaṇaṁ kṛtim  
no jane janito kiyadbhir amṛtaiḥ kṛṣṇeti varṇa-dvayi ||

I do not know out of how much nectar  
the two syllables of Krishna’s name have been fabricated:  
dancing madly on my tongue,  
they awaken in me the desire to possess many mouths;  
as they sprout in my ears, they give me the hope  
that I may one day have millions of ears;  
and as they enter into the garden of my heart  
they overcome the activities of every one of my senses,  
leaving me inert! (Vidagdha Madhava 1.15)

Hari Das Thakur, the acharya of the Holy Name, was amazed to hear such an extraordinary glorification of Krishna’s name and he started to dance. He said, “I have heard the glories of the Holy Name from many scriptures, but never a description like this of the sweetness of the Name!” (Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.1.101)

On another day, after visiting Jagannath, Mahaprabhu came to Siddha Bakula with his entire entourage, including Sri Svarupa Damodar Goswami, Ramananda Raya and Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya. Svarupa Damodar read the priyaḥ so'yaṁ verse quoted above to all the devotees and explained to everyone how as a result of Mahaprabhu's special mercy Rupa had been able to understand something that even Brahma and the demigods were unable to comprehend. Then the Lord asked Rupa to read the tuṇḍe taṇḍavini verse glorifying the Holy Name. All the devotees were delighted and said, "How often we have heard about the greatness of the Holy Name. But no one has ever written such a description of its sweetness!" (Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.1.122)

Then Ramananda Raya began discussing the subject matter of Rupa's plays with him. He asked to hear the verse glorifying the object of his devotion which would appear at the beginning of the play. At first, Rupa was reluctant to recite his composition in front of the Lord, as it was indeed he who was the object of the maṅgala verse. However, when the Lord insisted that he recite, Rupa read his verse aloud. Mahaprabhu externally expressed displeasure, saying, "Your praises are overdone. It is an exaggeration," but the rest of the devotees were overcome with ecstatic love. The verse is the second of the first act of Vidagdha-Madhava:

anarpita-carim̐ cirat karuṇayavatirṇaḥ kalau  
samarpayitum unnatojjvala-rasaṁ sva-bhakti-sriyam |  
hariḥ puraṭa-sundara-dyuti-kadamba-sandipitaḥ  
sada hṛdaya-kandare sphuratu vaḥ sacinandanaḥ ||

The elevated, effulgent taste of sacred rapture  
is the wealth of devotional love;  
the Lord never gives it at any time;  
yet, out of his mercy in this age of quarrel,



to distribute this treasure to the world,  
he has become incarnate in his golden form.  
The son of Sachi is like a lion;  
may he dwell in the cave of your heart forever.

When Ramananda Raya heard this extraordinary verse, drenched in love for the Lord, he began to praise Rupa Goswami with what seemed like a thousand tongues. He said that Rupa could only have written such an accurate portrayal of such difficult concepts as a result of the Lord's mercy.

Having heard the verse, Ramananda said to the Lord, "I wish I had a thousand tongues to glorify Rupa's poetic ability. This is not poetry, it is a fountain of ambrosia. He has exactly followed the classical tradition in composing his play. His description of Radha and Krishna's love affairs is truly wonderful. My ears and mind are spinning with delight upon hearing them. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.1.192-4)

Kali Das was considered the greatest Sanskrit poet until Rupa Goswami began to write his transcendental poetry, drenched with the divine sentiments.

## **Rupa in Vrindavan**

From Puri, Rupa returned to Gauḍadesa to make arrangements for the equitable distribution of his accumulated wealth amongst his family, Brahmins and temples, and stayed there for nearly a year before going to Vrindavan for good. In the meantime, Sanatan Goswami came to Puri via the Jharikhaṇḍa path and then returned by the same route to Vraja. When the two brothers met again, it had been more than a year since they had seen each other.

Rupa and Sanatan set an unequalled standard of discipline and exemplary method of worship:

These brothers have no fixed residence. They spend each night beneath a different tree in the forest, one night under one tree and the next under another. Sometimes, they beg dry food from a Brahmin's house and sometimes cooked food like dry bread and fried chick-peas. This is how they have given up all kinds of material enjoyments. They wrap themselves in a quilt and wear nothing but a piece of torn cloth, claiming only a waterpot for a possession. They engage almost twenty-four hours daily in rendering service to the Lord by chanting the holy names of Krishna and discussing his pastimes or dancing in great jubilation. They spend only an hour and a half in sleep, and some days, when overcome by the love of chanting the Lord's holy name, they do not sleep at all. Sometimes they write transcendental works about divine aesthetics, and sometimes they listen to talks about Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu or spend their time thinking about the Lord. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.19.127-31)

Rupa Goswami is credited with the authorship of 16 books: (1) Hamsaduta, (2) Uddhava-sandesa, (3) Krishna-janma-tithi-vidhi, (4) Laghu Radha-kṛṣṇa-gaṇoddesa-dipika, (5) Bṛhat Radha-kṛṣṇa-gaṇoddesa-dipika, (6) Stavamala, (7) Vidagdha Madhava, (8) Lalita Madhava, (9) Dana-keli-kaumudi, (10) Bhakti-rasamṛta-sindhu (11) Ujjvala-nilamaṇi, (12) Prayuktakhyata-candrika, (13) Mathura-mahima, (14) Padyavali, (15) Nāṭaka-candrika and (16) Laghu-bhagavatamṛta. Other than these sixteen titles, Upadesamṛta, Namaṣṭaka, Siddhanta-ratna and Kavya-kaustubha, etc., are attributed to Rupa Goswami.

Raghunath Das Goswami stayed in Mahaprabhu's association in Puri for sixteen years under the tutelage of Svarupa Damodar Goswami. When the Lord and Svarupa Damodar both ended their pastimes within this world, Raghunath became so saddened by their departure that he decided to come to Vrindavan to commit suicide by jumping off Govardhana after seeing Rupa and Sanatan one last time. The two brothers were very affectionate to Raghunath, however, and would not allow him to kill himself. Rather, they adopted him as a third brother and kept him constantly by their side.

Another of the Six Goswamis was Raghunath Bhaṭṭa Goswami, whose father was Tapan Mishra. When Mahaprabhu was in Benares, he stayed and ate

at the home of Tapan Mishra, giving the young Raghunath the opportunity to render him service by cleaning his remnants and massaging his feet, etc. When he grew older, he went to see the Lord in Puri and stayed there for eight months. During this time he served Mahaprabhu by cooking various vegetable preparations which gave the Lord great satisfaction. After this, the Lord ordered him to return to Benares to serve his aging parents, which Raghunath did for four years. When his parents died, Raghunath returned to Puri where the Lord told him to follow in Rupa's footsteps and to go to Vrindavan. Raghunath followed the Lord's directions and came to Vraja where by Rupa's mercy he became infused with love for Krishna. He would recite Srimad Bhagavatam for Rupa's pleasure.

## **Rupa Goswami and Govindaji**

In Vrindavan, Rupa Goswami established a temple for Govindaji, and Sanatan one for Madanamohana. Narahari describes the way that Govindaji appeared to Rupa in his Bhakti-ratnakara: Mahaprabhu had given four instructions to Rupa Goswami--he was to find the lost holy places in the dham, establish the service of a deity, to publish scriptures on pure devotional service, and to preach the love of the holy name. Rupa Goswami carried out every one of these desires of the Lord to perfection. Rupa was worried about how he could establish deity worship, and started wandering through the villages and forests in the Vraja area in search of Govindaji, but without success.

After the failure of these efforts, he was sitting one day by the banks of the Yamuna, upset and burning up with intense feelings of separation from Krishna. Just then, a divine personality taking the form of a handsome Vrajavasi came up to him and asked him in a sweet voice what was the cause of his distress. Rupa Goswami was attracted by the charming voice and appearance of the Vrajavasi and told him everything that had been troubling him. The man consoled Rupa, saying, "There is no cause for worry. You will find Govinda on the hill named Goma Tila, which is the Yoga Pith here in Vrindavan. Every morning a cow goes there and joyfully gives him milk." Having told him this, the Vrajavasi disappeared.

Rupa Goswami thought, “Krishna came here and spoke to me and I did not know who he was”, and he fainted. Somehow or another, he was able to overcome his feelings of loss at having been unable to recognize Krishna and he went to the place that the Vrajavasi had indicated. Other residents of the village helped him dig at Goma Ṭila until they found the deity of Govindaji, more beautiful than a million Cupids. It is said that this Govinda deity had originally been worshiped by Krishna’s own grandson, Vajranabha.

After revealing his presence on Goma Ṭila, Govindaji was first served in a simple thatched hut, but later, a disciple of Raghunath Bhatta built a beautiful temple and jaga-mohana, etc., to house the Lord. (Bhakti-ratnakara 2.404-37). In 1590, the king of Amber, Raja Manasimha, repaired the existing structure and built additions to it, with the result that there stood an exquisite sandstone temple. In his Mathura Memoir, Growse has described this temple in the following words: “The temple of Gobinda Dev is not only the finest of this particular series, but is the most impressive religious edifice that Hindu art has ever produced, at least in upper India.”

It is said that the seven-story building was so high that the emperor Aurangzeb could see its pinnacle from his palace in Agra. Out of envy, he destroyed the upper portion of the building. At around this time, Govindaji was moved first to Bharatpur and then later to Jaipur out of fear of Muslim iconoclasm, where he remains to this day.

### **Sri Rupa Manjari Pada**

Narottama Das Thakur has written has described Rupa Manjari or Rupa Goswami as his all-in-all in the following song from Prarthana:

sri rupa manjari pada sei mora sampada

sei mora bhajana-pujana

sei mora praṇa-dhana sei more abharaṇa

sei mora jivanera jivana

sei mora rasa-nidhi sei mora vancha-siddhi

sei mora vedera dharama

sei vrata, sei tapa sei mora mantra japa

sei mora dharama karama

anukula habe vidhi se pade hanbe siddhi

nirakhibo ei dui nayane

se rupa madhuri rasi praṇa kuvalaya-sasi

praphullita habe nisi-dine

tuwa adarsana ahi garale jarala dehi

ciradina tapita jivana

ha ha prabhu koro daya deha more pada chaya

narottama lanla saraṇa

Sri Rupa Manjari's feet are my only possession. They are my religious practice, my worship. They are my wealth, they are my ornament, the life of my life.

They are my treasurehouse of sacred rapture, they are the fulfilment of my deepest wishes, they are my prescribed duty. They are my religious vow; they are my austerities, my meditation and my mantra. They are my religious obligation.

One day, fate will smile upon me and I will be perfected in a position of service to her. I will see that form which is an ocean of sweetness, which will cause the moon lotus of my heart to bloom night and day.

The snake of separation from you spits a venom which burns my body. I have long suffered in this life. O my lord! Please be merciful and give me the shade of your lotus feet. Narottama has taken shelter of you.

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur also considered the dust from Rupa Goswami's feet to be the most important thing in his life. He often said that he desired nothing other than this.

adadas tṛṇaṁ dantair idaṁ yace punaḥ punaḥ |  
srīmad-rūpa-padambhoja-dhulīḥ syāṁ janma-janmaṁ ||

With bunches of straw between my teeth,  
I pray repeatedly that I may take birth again and again  
as a particle of dust at the lotus feet  
of Srila Rupa Goswami. (Raghunath Das, Mukta-caritra)

Rupa Goswami's samadhi temple can be found in the courtyard of the Radha Damodar temple in Vrindavan. This is also where he performed his bhajana at the end of his life. Other places consecrated to Rupa's memory in the Vraja area include his place of worship near Nandagrama, called Ṭerikadamba. In this place, Radha came in disguise to give Rupa milk, rice and sugar so that he could cook a sweet-rice preparation for Sanatan Goswami. When Sanatan tasted the sweet rice, he felt divine ecstasies invade his body. Upon learning how he had received the ingredients, however, Sanatan forbade Rupa to ever cook sweet rice

again, so that Radharani would not have to go to any trouble on his behalf.

Rupa Goswami's pastimes in this world came to an end in the month of Bhadra, on the twelfth day of the waxing moon, the day after Jhulana Ekadasi.

## **Srila Sanatan Goswami**

ya rupa-manjari-preṣṭha purasiad rati-manjari |  
socyate nama-bhedena lavaṅga-manjari budhaiḥ ||  
sadya gaurabhinna-tanuḥ sarvaradhyah sanatanah |  
tam eva pravisat karyan muni-ratnaḥ sanatanah ||

Rati Manjari, who was previously very dear to Rupa Manjari and was also known by some wise persons as Lavaṅga Manjari, has become the worshipable Sanatan, who is non-different from Gaura himself. The jewel amongst sages, Sanatan Kumara, has also entered into him to fulfill a certain mission. (Gaura-gaṇoddesa-dipika 181)

## **Sanatan's life before meeting Mahaprabhu**

According to the Gauḍiya Vaiṣṇava Abhidhana, Sanatan was born in around 1410 of the Saka era (1488 AD). Narahari Chakravarti Thakur has described his ancestors in Bhakti-ratnakara (1.541ff) and Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur has given a summary of this information in his Anubhaṣya to Chaitanya Charitamrita (1.10.84), which we have quoted in this book on page 12

in our discussion of the life of Rupa Goswami. Other than this, no reliable information about their antecedents has been found. Perhaps researchers in Indian history will be able to shed more light on this.

According to the Gauḍiya Vaiṣṇava Abhidhana, the following brief account is given of how Sanatan's grandfather came to be engaged in the Muslim Shah's service: "During the reign of Barbak Shah (1460-1470 AD), Sanatan's grandfather Mukunda entered the court at the capital city of Gauḍa. Barbak Shah engaged many Abyssinian slaves and eunuchs in both his court and harem; they were known as habsi [which is now the common Bengali word for any black African]. After the death of Barbak Shah, his son Yusuf became king, and he was followed by his son Fateh Shah. During the reign of Fateh Shah, the Abyssinians led a coup in which Fateh Shah himself was assassinated. They ruled for five or six years. Hussein Shah was the wazir or prime minister of the last of the Abyssinian rulers and he later became himself ruler of Bengal. Mukunda left this world during the rule of Fateh Shah and Mukunda was engaged in his place. Sanatan managed to survive the Abyssinian period and during Hussein Shah's reign managed to take a higher position on the strength of his personal talents, eventually becoming prime minister. Rupa Goswami held another ministerial post, possibly as finance minister." Sanatan's title was Sakara Mallik and Rupa's was Dabir Khas.

While Sri Sanatan Goswami was still young, he studied under the country's leading scholar named Vidyavacaspati, learning many scriptures from him. He was especially attached to the study of the Srimad Bhagavatam. Although he had taken birth in a high class Brahmin family, because he had worked for the Muslim government, he considered himself to be fallen and always behaved in a most humble manner, as is appropriate for a Vaishnava.

Sanatan's teacher was Vidyavacaspati who would come to stay in Ramakeli from time to time. Sanatan studied all the scriptures from him. No one can achieve the depth of devotion that he had for his guru. (Bhakti-ratnakara 1.598-9)

Sanatan's father would perform atonement rituals after even seeing a Muslim, yet Sanatan himself would associate constantly with Muslims. Being dependent on them for his livelihood, he would even go into their homes. For this reason, he considered himself to be on the same level as the Muslims and behaved very humbly. Sometimes, when he had fallen into the ocean of humility, he would think of himself as even lower than a mleccha. Because he had associated with



Muslims and behaved in a lowly manner like them, he would speak of himself in that way. Though born in the highest class family of Brahmins, he never thought of himself as a Brahmin. (Bhakti-ratnakara 1.609-14)

Through Ramananda [the Lord] destroyed Cupid's pride; through Svarupa Damodar he demonstrated detachment. Through Hari Das Thakur, he demonstrated forbearance and through Rupa and Sanatan Goswami, he taught humility. (Bhakti-ratnakara 1.630-1)

All the participants in Krishna's lila also made their appearance in Gaura's incarnation in order to enrich his pastimes. Through them, the Lord gives various teachings to the people of this world.

Through Hari Das, he revealed the glories of the Holy Name; through Sanatan, the articles of faith in devotional service. Through Rupa he taught Radha and Krishna's pastimes of love. Who can understand the mysterious workings of the Lord? (Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.5.86-7)

Through Sanatan's mercy, I learned the points of devotional doctrine, while through Rupa's mercy, I learned about the divine devotional sentiments. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 1.5.203)

Thus Sanatan has been called the bhakti-siddhantacarya, or the teacher of devotional doctrine, by which is meant the teacher of sambandha-jnana, or of the basic relations between God, man and the world. The founder of the Chaitanya Math, Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur, whose various branches have spread throughout the world, mercifully gave his disciples a poem entitled "Who is a Vaishnava?" The nectarean instructions which are found in this poem mention the teachings of Mahaprabhu to Sanatan Goswami from the Chaitanya Charitamrita.

tai duṣṭa mana    nirjana bhajana

pracaricha chale kuyogi-vaibhava

prabhu sanatane    parama yatane

sikṣa dila yaha, cinta sei saba

So, wicked mind, you have deceptively been preaching nirjana-bhajana, the practice of the eremitic life, which is nothing more than a display, like that of a misleading yoga practitioner interested in the mystic powers. Study the teachings of the Lord to Sanatan very carefully and meditate upon them.

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur thus instructs us all to give great attention to the Lord's teachings to Sanatan, or those teachings which he gave to the world through Sanatan Goswami.

### **First meeting in Ramakeli**

After Mahaprabhu took sannyas, he first went to Shantipur and then on to Puri and then on pilgrimage to South India. After completing his pilgrimage and returning to Puri, Mahaprabhu decided to go to Vrindavan via the route which follows the Ganges through Bengal. Great crowds of people accompanied him and he eventually decided to turn back from Kanair Natshala. He met Rupa and Sanatan for the first time while passing through the village of Ramakeli on this voyage.

Ramakeli is in the district of Maldah in West Bengal, about eight miles south of English Bazar, which was the district headquarters, and about five or six miles from the Maldah train station. It is also known as Gupta ("hidden") Vrindavan. There are a number of sites which are worth seeing as reminders of Rupa and Sanatan: (1) A tamala and a kadamba tree under which Mahaprabhu is said to have been sitting when he met Rupa and Sanatan; a shrine containing the footprints of the Lord has been constructed there as a memorial of that meeting. The Lord distributed love of Krishna to all the devotees in this location. (2) The temple of Madana-mohana. This Madana-mohana deity was personally worshiped by Sanatan Goswami. There are also deities of Nitai-Gauranga and Advaita Prabhus. (3) There are several tanks, which are named Radha Kuṇḍ, Syama Kuṇḍ, Surabhi Kuṇḍ, Lalita Kuṇḍ and Visakha Kuṇḍ. (4) A large man-made lake named Rupa Sagara, which is said to have been excavated by Rupa Goswami, and (5) another named Sanatan Sagara. Rupa and Sanatan had large

mansions built both in Ramakeli and Fateyabad.

At first, when the Muslim king heard that such great crowds of Hindus had assembled in the nearby village, he was worried. One of the Hindu members of the Shah's court was Keshava Khattri, who explained to him that there was no reason to fear Mahaprabhu. Rupa Goswami (Dabir Khas) also glorified Mahaprabhu to the king, telling him of his fortune in having the Lord bless the country by his presence. Keshava Kṣatriya, meanwhile, sent a secret message to the Lord telling him to go elsewhere because the King could not be trusted.

The King said, "Listen, I am also beginning to think that this person must be God himself. There is no doubt about it." After having this conversation, the king entered his private quarters and Dabir Khas also returned to his residence. After returning to there, however, he and his brother decided after much consideration to go incognito to see the Lord. Thus, in the dead of night the two brothers, Dabir Khas and Sakara Mallik, went to see Mahaprabhu. First they met Nityananda Prabhu and Hari Das Thakur. Nityananda Prabhu and Hari Das then went and told the Lord that Rupa and Sakara Mallik had come to see him. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.1.180-4)

When Rupa and Sanatan met the Lord, they spoke to him with extreme humility:

"We two are millions of times more degraded, fallen and sinful than Jagai and Madhai. We are of wicked birth because we are the servants of Muslims and our activities are exactly like those of the Muslims. We constantly associate with people who are inimical toward the cows and Brahmins. Due to our abominable activities we are now bound by the neck and hands and have been thrown into the ditch filled with the excrement of evil sense enjoyment." (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.1.196-199)

It is very distressful to us that we are so unworthy, yet when we see your merciful qualities, we become desirous of attaining your blessings. This powerful desire rises up in us as that of a dwarf who wants to touch the moon. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.1.204-5)

When the Lord heard the extreme humility of the two brothers, he became compassionate and said to them, "You are my eternal servants. From now on you shall be known as Rupa and Sanatan. I came to Bengal just so that I could meet

you here in Ramakeli village. Krishna will deliver you from your entanglements very shortly.”

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur has written the following comment in his *Anubhaṣya* (*Chaitanya Charitamrita* 2.1.208): “Mahāprabhu showed his mercy to Dabir Khas and Sakar Mallik by giving them the spiritual names of Rupa and Sanatan, respectively. Nama-karaṇa is a type of saṁskara on the lowest level of qualification. However, those who ignore the mercy that is manifest in the spiritual name have no chance of attaining devotion to Krishna, but remain intoxicated with material prestige. The prakṛta-sahajiyas pay no heed to the injunctions of the scripture which state that the minimum characteristics of a Vaishnava are that he wears the symbols of the discus and conchshell and urdhva-puṇḍra (tilaka) and takes one of the names of Krishna. As such, they cannot be qualified as Gaudiya Vaishnavas. Non-Vaishnavas have not been given a name by the Vaishnava guru and so they continue in the bodily conception of life without any awareness of their relationship with the Lord. They continue to identify themselves with their previous caste according to the name which ties them to their body.”

Amongst the Lord’s companions present on this occasion were Nityananda Prabhu, Hari Das Thakur, Srivasa Pandit, Srila Gadadhara Pandit Goswami, Mukunda Datta, Jagadananda Pandit, Murari Gupta, Vakresvara Pandit and many others. The Lord had them all give their blessings to Rupa and Sanatan. As the Lord was departing, the worldly-wise Sanatan said to him,

You should leave this place, Lord. You have no business here. Even though the Shah has faith in you, he is a Muslim and cannot be trusted. To go on pilgrimage with such a large company of devotees is not recommended. You are going to Vrindavan with an entourage of hundreds and thousands of people, and this is not a fitting way to go on a pilgrimage.” (*Chaitanya Charitamrita* 2.1.222-4)

Mahāprabhu continued on as far as Kanair Naṭasala, but as he considered the wisdom of Sanatan’s advice, he decided to turn back, first going to Shantipur and then to Puri.

After he and his entourage had given their mercy to Rupa and Sanatan, they left Ramakeli village. (*Bhakti-ratnakara* 1.635)

## **Sanatan escapes from prison**

Rupa and Sanatan are the eternal associates of Krishna in Vrindavan. They appeared in this world in order to enrich Lord Gauranga's lila by playing the role of aspirants for spiritual perfection (sadhakas). After meeting Mahaprabhu, they began to feel very impatient to change their lifestyle. They became very renounced and austere. In order to quickly be united with Mahaprabhu, they engaged two Brahmins in the performance of a purascarana.<sup>11611</sup>Cf. explanation in chapter 3, page 16.<sup>11611</sup>

Srila Rupa Goswami finally resigned from his government service and he deposited 10,000 coins on behalf of his older brother with a grocer in the capital Gauḍa. Then he took the rest of their accumulated wealth with him to Bakla Candradvipa where he divided it up amongst the Vaishnavas, Brahmins and his family, while keeping a quarter of it with a trustworthy Brahmin against future necessity. He then sent two people to Puri to find out when Mahaprabhu intended to travel to Vrindavan.

Hussein Shah used to treat Sanatan Goswami as his younger brother and had great affection for him. Sanatan thought that the affection of the king, or indeed of any materialistic person, was a source of material bondage. If the king became angry with him, it would make it easier for him to break away from his entanglements. For this reason, he stopped performing his duties in the Shah's court, pretending to be ill. Though he claimed to be seriously ill, he was in fact engaged in an intense study of the Bhagavat with a group of Sanskrit scholars.

The Shah was disquieted by Sanatan's illness and he sent a doctor to examine him. The doctor came back and reported to the king that Sanatan was in good health and that he was studying the Bhagavat with a group of paṇḍitas. When he heard this, the Shah went to Sanatan himself and spoke to him very affectionately, trying to convince him to come back to work. Sanatan refused, however, to return to his ministerial duties and furthermore refused to accompany the Shah in the war he was preparing with Orissa. The Shah became suspicious of Sanatan and had him put in prison.

In the meantime, Rupa had received the news that Mahaprabhu had taken the jungle route through Jharikhanda for Vrindavan. He himself immediately departed for Vraja with his younger brother Anupama Mallik. He sent Sanatan a letter telling him know of his intentions, telling him to take any necessary action to free himself and then to come and join them. The letter consisted of the following Sanskrit verse:

yadupateḥ kva gata mathura Puri  
raghupateḥ kva gatottara-kosala |  
iti vicintya kuruṣva manaḥ sthiraṁ  
na sad idaṁ jagad ity avadharaya ||

Where has the Mathura of the Lord of the Yadus gone?

And where is the kingdom of Kosala

of the Lord of the Raghus?

Contemplate this and make your mind steady:

beware, this world will not last forever.

(Amṛta-pravaha-bhaṣya, 2.20.3)

Sanatan was able to understand the secret meaning of the verse, which indicated that the Lord had gone to Mathura, and was overjoyed. He began to consider how he could escape from prison.

Sanatan knew the Muslim jailkeeper, for he was the one who had hired him. He began trying to persuade him to let him go, saying that the Almighty would surely bless and give him salvation for setting free someone who had been unjustly imprisoned. The jailor remained unconvinced, so Sanatan tried to

win him over by reminding him that he owed him a favor for having given him the job.

When the jail keeper still refused to let him go, Sanatan offered him a bribe of 5,000 rupees. At this, the jailkeeper's resolve began to waver, but he was still afraid of being caught by the Badshah. Sanatan told him, "The Shah has gone to war. When he comes back, just tell him that I went to the toilet. Then when I went to the Ganges to wash myself, I jumped into the water and disappeared. Say that you looked everywhere but couldn't find me."

Sanatan further assured him that he would not remain in the area, as it was his intention to become a Sufi and go on the Haj to Mecca. Therefore, he need not worry on that account. The jailor remained reticent, however, and finally Sanatan had the grocer bring 7,000 rupees of the money which Rupa had left in his safekeeping and placed it directly in front of him. When he saw the money before him, the jailor became greedy and capitulated. He cut Sanatan's chains and helped him to cross the Ganges.

In general, we consider flattery, asking return for a favor, putting temptation before someone, telling someone to lie, and bribery all to be unethical acts. Sanatan, however, used all the means at his disposal to escape bondage so that he could join the Lord and engage in his service. To achieve an auspicious end, any means may be permissible. The purity or impurity of a particular means depends on the purity or impurity of the objectives to be achieved. In order to serve his master Rama, the Supreme Brahman, Hanuman burned down Lañka, killing many living beings. Because he was acting for the pleasure of the all-auspicious Supreme Lord, however, everyone was ultimately benefited by his action, and Hanuman is still considered worshipable to this very day. On the other hand, one could bathe in a holy river three times a day and worship the deity of the Lord, and be completely in the mode of ignorance if his objective is to do harm to other beings.

Even from the worldly point of view we see that one who commits murder is considered a criminal and is punished by the death penalty, but if one fights on the battlefield to save the nation and kills many members of an enemy army, he is not punished but rather decorated with medals. This is because he is not acting for personal ends, but for those of the collectivity. This is easy to understand, but when one acts, not for the limited purposes of serving the country, or even the entire world, but for the supremely auspicious owner of unlimited millions of

universes, then that is the most justifiable of purposes and the highest benefits are attained by everyone through such actions. In the Padma-purāṇa, it is written:

man-nimittam kṛtam papam api dharmaya kalpate |

mam anadṛtya dharmo 'pi papam syan mat-prabhavataḥ ||

Even sinful activities done for my sake are to be considered religious acts. On the other hand, pious activities done while disdaining me are considered to be sin. This is the extent of my power.

Those who chant the Holy Names or make a show of devotion, but in fact are seeking to achieve mundane, egoistic goals, are factually engaged in sin and are destined for a hellish fate. Krishna also states in the Bhagavad-gita,

yasya na haṁkṛto bhava buddhir yasya na lipyate |

hatvapi sa imal lokan na hanti na nibadhyate ||

He who is free from egotism (arising from aversion to the Absolute), and whose intelligence is not implicated (in worldly activities)--even if he kills every living being in the whole world--does not kill at all, nor does he suffer a murderer's consequences. (Bhagavad-gita 18.17)

When causeless devotion is manifest in the soul and one's heart has an honest eagerness to find service to the Lord, then one gives up all consideration for happiness in this world, for renunciation is a side effect of unmotivated devotion.



## Isana nearly gets Sanatan killed

Sanatan had been prime minister, yet he escaped from jail with practically not a penny to his name. He did not take the main highway, but travelled as quickly as possible through fields and villages until he reached Patara Mountain, which is part of the Raj Mahal Hills in the Choṭa Nagpur area in the state of Bihar. He did not know how to get across this mountain, and so requested the aid of a landowner who was also a robber chieftain. Accompanying Sanatan was a longtime personal servant named Isana. Through the help of a palmist, the landowner was able to know that Isana had eight gold coins in his possession, so he welcomed Sanatan into his home and treated him with great hospitality.

Sanatan was sufficiently experienced from his years in politics to become suspicious of the warm treatment he was getting from his host, and so he asked Isana whether he was carrying anything of value. Isana answered that he had seven gold coins, keeping his other coin a secret from him. Sanatan said, “Why have you brought this ruination upon us?” After gently chastising his servant in this way, he took the coins from him and gave them to his host, asking him to help him get across the mountain.

The landowner then revealed to Sanatan that he had known all along about the eight gold coins and that it had been his intention to murder them both that night somewhere on the mountain in order to take the money. He was very pleased that Sanatan had given him the gold and was even ready to return it to him, but Sanatan refused. He was intelligent enough to understand the adage: *avyavasthita-cittasya prasado’pi bhayaṅkaraḥ*, “even the kindness of an undependable person is dangerous.”

dhurtasya vacane kvastha kvacit satyaṁ kvacin mṛṣa |

kvacid raudraṁ kvacid vṛṣṭiḥ sravaṇasya ghano yatha ||

How can one have faith in the words of a rascal? He sometimes tells the truth and sometimes falsehoods. Just as with the clouds of Shravan--sometimes there

is sunshine and sometimes rain.

After they had crossed the mountain, Sanatan told Isana to take the remaining gold coin and return home. Isana had shown by his attachment to this gold coin that he was not yet ready to accept a life of renunciation, that he was too dependent on material conditions. When unqualified people take the renounced orders, then these orders themselves become contaminated. This is the lesson that Sanatan gave through his servant Isana.

### **Sanatan meets the Lord in Benares**

After bidding good bye to Isana, Sanatan continued on his way until he arrived at Hajipur on the northern bank of the Ganges near Patna. Sanatan's brother-in-law, Srikanta, made his home there. Though Srikanta invited him to stay there for a few days to recuperate from the voyage, Sanatan declined his invitation because of his desire to see the Lord. Srikanta gave him a valuable blanket of Bhutanese wool.

Sanatan then continued on to Benares where he was overjoyed to learn that Mahaprabhu was staying at the house of the physician, Chandrasekhara. Sanatan did not go straight into Chandrasekhara's house but waited on his front porch. The Lord, the indweller of all souls, knew of his devotee's arrival and sent Chandrasekhara to the door to invite him in. As soon as Sanatan entered, Mahaprabhu immediately rushed to embrace him. The meeting of the Lord with his devotee affected them both so intensely that they were overcome by the transformations of ecstatic love. In his affection for Sanatan, the Lord started to brush off the dust accumulated on his body from his travels, but this caused Sanatan to feel uncomfortable. He told the Lord not to touch him, but the Lord answered,

“I touch you in order to purify myself. Your devotional force is so great that you can purify the entire universe. I look at you, I touch you and I sing your glories. By so doing, all my senses attain their most perfect use.” (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.20.56,60)

The Lord repeated again and again that he was touching Sanatan for his own purification and for the purification of the entire universe. Then he immediately added, “Listen Sanatan. Krishna is the ocean of mercy, he saves the most fallen. He has delivered you from the hell known as Raurava.” Sanatan is, of course, an eternal associate, so there is no question of his being truly fallen, but Mahaprabhu wished to make a point for the benefit of the people of the world. He wanted to teach that worldly honor measured in terms of one’s fortune and accumulation of sense objects is in truth misfortune, since the accumulation of material possessions for the sake of gross or subtle sense gratification ultimately leads to a hellish existence. Conditioned souls who are bewildered by the illusory energy are constantly busy working hard in order to accumulate wealth, position and influence, whether by fair means or foul. Seldom does one come across an exemplary householder who knows that Krishna is the only true enjoyer and engages all his worldly possessions in the Lord’s service rather than considering them to be the objects of his own enjoyment.

While Mahaprabhu was in Benares, he stayed with Chandrasekhara and took his meals at the house of Tapan Mishra. Mahaprabhu introduced Sanatan to these two devotees, and Tapan Mishra invited Sanatan to come to his house and take Mahaprabhu’s prasada remnants. After many days in prison and travelling, Sanatan’s hair and beard had grown long. The Lord told him to get shaved, so that he would look “respectable”. Vaishnavas in general are clean shaven, growing neither beard nor moustache. With the exception of the caturmasya period when one does not shave nor cut the fingernails, this is the accepted practice for Vaishnava men. Vaishnava sannyasis, however, usually shave only once a month on the full moon day, as for them to shave daily would be considered unnecessary preoccupation with the body.

After being shaved, Sanatan took his bath in the Ganges. When he came back to the house, Chandrasekhara wanted to give him a new cloth, but Sanatan refused it, taking back his old one. Though he had been rich enough to give clothes to thousands of mendicants, on this day he was reluctant to accept a new cloth for himself. When one’s desire to worship the Lord is real, one becomes indifferent to nice clothes or good food. Accepting gifts from Vaishnavas or taking their remnants is an exception to this rule, however, as these do not have the poisonous character that other sense objects have. Every single one of Sanatan’s actions contains a lesson for the conscientious sadhaka.

Mahaprabhu was extremely pleased to see Sanatan’s renunciation. Thus it

is said,

mahaprabhura bhakta jata vairagya pradhana |

yaha dekhi' tuṣṭa han gaura bhagavan ||

Renunciation is the predominating characteristic of every one of Mahaprabhu's devotees. When Lord Gauranga sees their renunciation, he is very pleased. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.6.220)

When one is intoxicated by material sensuality and enjoyments and engaged in competition to attain them, one is destined for a falldown from any spiritual attainment.

There was a Maharashtrian Brahmin who invited Sanatan to come daily to his house to eat for as long as he stayed in Benares. Sanatan refused, however, saying that he preferred to keep body and soul together by eating only madhukari, that is to say, by begging a handful of food from several houses each day. A pure devotee has no desire for bodily comfort.

Sanatan Goswami had torn his old cloth into two to make a loincloth (bahirvasa) and a shawl (uttariya), but even so, he continued to wrap himself in the Bhutanese wool blanket. Mahaprabhu looked repeatedly at this blanket, and Sanatan realized that Mahaprabhu did not approve of it. That day, when he went to the Ganges ghaṭ, he saw a Bengali mendicant washing a quilt in the river. He offered him his expensive blanket in exchange for the quilt. When Sanatan came back wearing the threadbare quilt, the Lord was pleased.

The Lord said, "I had been thinking about this. It seems that since Lord Krishna is very merciful, he has cured you of your disease of attachment to sense enjoyment. Why then would he allow you to hold fast to a last bit of material attachment? After restoring someone to health, a good physician does not allow any trace of the disease to remain. It is contradictory to practice madhukari while wearing a blanket worth three gold coins. By so doing, you would have lost your spiritual strength and become a laughing stock." (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.20.90-2)

Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu is the Supreme Personality of Godhead himself. Even so, he played the role of the supreme teacher. He insisted that his personal associates maintain the standards of behavior that he set and himself followed.

I shall accept the role of a devotee and shall teach devotional service by practicing it myself. It is explained in the Bhagavat and the Bhagavad-gita that if one does not oneself practice a religious principle, it cannot be taught. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 1.3.20-1)

yad yad acarati sreṣṭhas tat tad evetaro janaḥ |

sa yat pramaṇaṁ kurute lokas tad anuvartate ||

The general masses imitate the ways of great men. They follow whatever the great personality accepts as the right conclusion. (Bhagavad-gita 3.21)

### **The Lord’s teachings to Sanatan**

Being pleased with Sanatan, Mahaprabhu infused him with spiritual power, giving him the capacity to ask appropriate questions about the practice of true spiritual life. Without the mercy of the Supreme Lord, genuine, honest questions on such matters cannot arise in someone’s mind. Most people ask questions thinking that they already know the right answer, simply as a sort of debating technique. No spiritual benefit arises from such types of questions. Honest questions meant to find out doctrinal truths leading to surrender are called pariprasna (“relevant inquiry”) in the Bhagavad-gita:

Tad viddhi praṇipatena pariprasnena sevaya |

upadekṣyanti te jnanam jnaninas tattva-darsinaḥ ||

You will be able to attain all this knowledge by satisfying the enlightened spiritual master with prostrate obeisances, relevant inquiry, and sincere service. Great souls who are most expert in scriptural knowledge and endowed with direct realization of the Supreme Absolute Truth will teach you that divine knowledge. (Bhagavad-gita 4.34)

On the day a person undertakes his journey on the road to liberation, when his material entanglement is about to start the process of termination, he meets a spiritual master. Sanatan Goswami was himself an ever-liberated soul and a permanent companion of the Lord, but he showed what questions the aspiring practitioner of devotional service should ask his spiritual master on that day. He said to the Lord:

“I was born in a low family and have always associated with low-class men. I am fallen and the lowest of men. Indeed, I have fallen into the well of sinful materialism and passed my whole life there. I have no idea of what is beneficial for me and what is not. In ordinary dealings, people consider me wise, and I have also come to think of myself as such. You have mercifully delivered me from the materialistic path. Now, by the same causeless mercy, please explain to me my duty. I don’t know who I am or why the threefold miseries constantly wear me down, so how can I attain the highest good? Actually, I do not even know how to inquire about the goal of life and the process for obtaining it. Please be merciful upon me and explain all these things to me.” (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.20.99-103)

Sanatan’s first question was *ami ke?* “Who am I?” This is the first question which arises in the heart of a person seeking the highest good. If one makes a mistake in assessing his true identity, then he will make errors when it comes to determining the ultimate goal of life. If one makes an error in determining the ultimate goal of life, then everything he does, every effort he makes, will be wasted. All of one’s duties, religious observations and self-interest rest upon the proper knowledge of oneself. If one takes the body to be the self, then he considers the maintenance of the body itself to be the goal of life or *prayojana-tattva*, and one’s self-interest will be the fulfilment of goals related to the body; duties will also be considered in terms of these ends, and morality, or the

determination of good and bad, will all be determined on the basis of what is good or bad for the body. On the other hand, if someone takes the subtle body to be the self, then one will consider his personal interests in terms of its development and he will consider his religious duty to help others to develop in this way. Those who consider the self to be a soul which exists beyond the gross and subtle bodies will consider its development to be their self-interest and will consider it their religious duty to help other people to develop spiritually. Those whose vision is sufficiently clear to recognize their identity as spirit soul, but find themselves in the undesirable situation of bondage to the gross and subtle material bodies, still make favorable use of these coverings in an understanding of their true self-interest, which is that of the soul. They avoid the unfavorable use of the gross and subtle bodies.

In his teachings to Sanatan Goswami, Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu taught that the living being's true identity is to be Krishna's eternal servant. The jiva is the Lord's *tatastha-sakti*, or marginal energy, his separated expansion, who is simultaneously one and different from him. The Lord taught him the *sadhya* and the *sadhana*, the goal of the seeker, and the methods by which the seeker achieves his goal. Mahaprabhu summarized the three elements of his teaching as the *sambandha*, saying that it was Krishna, the *abhidheya*, the practice which leads to perfection or devotion to Krishna, and the *prayojana*, the supreme goal of spiritual life or love for Krishna or *prema*.

The sum total of the Vedic literatures explains three things: *sambandha*, *abhidheya* and *prayojana*. The living entity's eternal relationship with Krishna is called *sambandha*. Devotional service is the process by which one attains the supreme objective, Krishna. Devotional service, or sense activity for the satisfaction of the Lord, is called *abhidheya* because it can develop one's original love of Godhead, which is the goal of life, the *prayojana*. This goal is the living entity's topmost interest and greatest treasure. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.20.124-5)

All these matters have been explained at great length, with copious quotations from scripture, by Krishnadas Kaviraj Goswami in his Chaitanya Charitamrita, from the 20th to the 23rd chapters of the *Madhya-lila*. Rather than repeat these teachings in detail here, which would lead to this account of Sanatan Goswami's life becoming over long, we will limit ourselves to a brief summary.

Mahaprabhu told Sanatan that the various scriptures, in particular, the Sruti, contain statements which indicate that the living being is both one with and different from the Supreme Lord. Different acharyas have put forth a variety of doctrines explaining the relation between this oneness and distinction, named advaita-vada, dvaita-vada, visiṣṭadvaita-vada, suddhadvaita-vada, dvaitadvaita-vada, etc.. If one accepts the scripture, one must accept it in its entirety, including both types of affirmation, and try to find a way to harmonize the apparent contradictions. Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's solution to the problem was to establish the doctrine named acintya-bhedabheda, "inconceivable oneness and difference". This doctrine has been looked upon favorably around the world and created a revolution in thinking.

Mahaprabhu concluded his teachings with a discourse on the atmarama verse:

atmaramas ca munayo  
nirgrantha apy urukrame |  
kurvanty ahaitukim bhaktim  
ittham-bhuta-guṇo hariḥ ||

Self-satisfied sages who are freed from any bondage also engage in the unmotivated service of Sri Krishna, whose activities are all wonderful. Such are the transcendently attractive features of Hari!

Mahaprabhu gave eighteen different explanations of this verse from the Srimad Bhagavat to Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya. When Sanatan asked the Lord to allow him to hear them, Mahaprabhu treated him to 61 different interpretations.

**Sanatan goes to Vraja**



After this, Mahaprabhu converted Prakashananda Saraswati and the other sannyasis of Benares to Vaiṣṇavism. When he had completed instructing Sanatan in a most thorough fashion, he sent him to Vrindavan while he himself took the less frequented road to Puri. Sanatan took the main highway to Vrindavan where he met Subuddhi Raya who was following Mahaprabhu's instructions to atone for his past sins by chanting Hare Krishna. Though he was barely able to make a living selling dry wood, Subuddhi would provide for the Vaishnavas who came to Vraja from Bengal.

Sanatan took the pilgrimage circuit through the twelve forests of Vraja in the company of Subuddhi and the Sanoriya Brahmin. From them he learned that Rupa and Anupama had also completed the circuit not long before and had then taken the road along the banks of the Ganges to return to Bengal.

When Mahaprabhu himself did the Vraja parikrama, he discovered Radha Kund and Syama Kund near Ariṭ village. Then he went to see the deity of Harideva at Govardhana after which he desired to see Giridhari Gopal. The Gopal deity of Madhavendra Puri had his temple on top of the hill. Mahaprabhu had vowed not to walk on Govardhana, but nevertheless wished to take darshan of Gopal. While he was wondering how to solve this problem, there was a panic in the area that the Muslims were planning to destroy images throughout Vraja and so Gopal's pujaris took him out of his temple and hid him in the village of Gaṭholi. Mahaprabhu then could go there and take his darshan. From time to time, Gopal would perform this pastime of being moved to Gaṭholi in this way. Sanatan also had the good fortune to be able to visit Gopal while he was there.

### **Sanatan visits the Lord in Puri**

It took Rupa Goswami longer to get to Bengal than he had expected and so he was unable to join the other devotees on their annual trip to Puri to see the Lord. He therefore arrived some time after the main group and went to stay with Hari Das Thakur. When Mahaprabhu met Rupa, he inquired after Sanatan and heard from him that the brothers had taken different roads and thus missed each other.

After touring Vrindavan, Sanatan Goswami took the Jharikhaṇḍa route to Puri. As a result of drinking bad water in the jungle, Sanatan came down with scabies. He became depressed as a result of the running sores on his body and in his despondency began to plan a suicide, thinking that due to his low birth and his now disgusting physical condition, he would not only be unable to go near the temple and see Jagannath, but would also be deprived of Mahaprabhu's darshan. He would not even be able to stay close enough to the temple to see it, and if Lord Jagannath's servants should accidentally touch him, he would commit a great offense. All in all, he thought it would be better to throw himself under the wheels of Jagannath's chariot and be crushed to death while watching Mahaprabhu dance.

When he finally arrived in Puri, he went directly to see Hari Das Thakur and paid his respectful obeisances to him and Hari Das affectionately embraced him. Sanatan then began to stay with him. Thus when Mahaprabhu came to see Hari Das, as he was wont to do, Sanatan had the opportunity to see him. The Lord was so overcome by divine love when he saw Sanatan that he approached with the intention of embracing him. Sanatan retreated, however, thinking himself too impure to be touched by the Lord. Nevertheless, Mahaprabhu would not let him escape and took him in his arms by force, holding him tightly enough that the fluid oozing from Sanatan's sores was smeared on his body, the sight of which broke Sanatan's heart. Mahaprabhu then gave Sanatan the news of Rupa's visit and Anupama's devotion to Rama and his departure for Rama's eternal abode.

On another day, the all-knowing Mahaprabhu came to Siddha Bakula where Hari Das and Sanatan stayed and suddenly confronted Sanatan with his intention to commit suicide during the Rathayatra festival. He said,

“My dear Sanatan, if I could attain Krishna by committing suicide, then I would give up millions of bodies without a moment's hesitation. But I cannot attain Krishna simply by giving up the body, but only through bhajana. There is no means other than devotional service by which to attain him.” (Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.4.55-6)

In this way, Mahaprabhu taught the world through Sanatan that suicide is an act of the mode of ignorance which cannot be used to attain Krishna. It is only through the cultivation of pure devotion in practice that one can attain the Supreme Lord. The best forms of bhajana, or worship, are known as the nine

kinds of devotional service, or nava-vidha bhakti. The best of these is the congregational chanting of the Holy Names of Krishna, Harinama-sankirtana. Finally, Mahaprabhu revealed how dear Sanatan was to him when he said,

“You have already surrendered yourself to me, so your body is now my personal property. Why do you want to destroy another’s property? Are you unable to distinguish right from wrong? Your body is an important instrument of mine through which I shall accomplish many things.” (Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.4.76-8)

During the Caturmasya period, many Bengali and Orissan devotees would come to Puri to be with the Lord, and that year they also met Sanatan. Sanatan was struck with wonder by the Lord’s dancing before Jagannath’s chariot. When the Bengali Vaishnavas returned to their homes after the four month period, Sanatan remained in Puri.

During the hot season, in the month of Jyestha, the Lord stayed with Gadadhara Pandit at Yamesvara Ṭoṭa. One day, he called Sanatan to come and see him at noontime. Rather than taking the main road leading from the Simha Dvara to the seashore, Sanatan took another path which led across the hot sands of the beach. Though Sanatan had no consciousness of the burning heat of the sand, his feet were covered in blisters when he arrived.

The Lord asked Sanatan why he had not taken the path which led from the Simha Dvara. Sanatan replied,

“I have no right to pass by the Simha-dvara, for the servants of Jagannath are always coming and going there. Since they are always using that road, I would not be able to pass without touching them. If that should happen, I would be ruined.” (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.4.126-7)

Mahaprabhu was very pleased by Sanatan’s respect for Jagannath’s pujaris and by his humility. He answered him as follows:

“My dear Sanatan, you can save the entire universe and even the demigods and great saints are purified by touching you. Nevertheless, it is the characteristic of a devotee to observe Vaishnava etiquette. Maintenance of Vaishnava etiquette is the ornament of a devotee. One who transgresses these rules of behavior becomes a laughing stock and is lost both in this world and the next. By observing the etiquette, you have brought me great satisfaction. Who else but

you will set this standard?” (Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.4.126-7)

Mahaprabhu embraced Sanatan again and again, and once again, the oozing fluids from Sanatan’s blisters were smeared all over the Lord’s body.

Finally, Sanatan became so troubled by the situation that he went to discuss the matter with Jagadananda Pandit, asking him for advice on how to free himself from the offenses that he was unwillingly committing. Jagadananda suggested that Sanatan leave Puri and return to Vrindavan.

The next time that Mahaprabhu came to Siddha Bakula and embraced him, Sanatan blurted out his distress, saying that he should never have come to Puri as his coming had only resulted in his committing countless offenses. The contaminating impurities from his scabies daily touched the Lord’s body, plunging him deeper and deeper into misery. He begged Mahaprabhu for permission to leave for Vrindavan, letting him know that it was Jagadananda who had thus advised him.

When Mahaprabhu heard this, he became angry and said,

“Jagadananda is just a newcomer, a boy. Yet, he has become so proud that he thinks he can give even you advice. You are his guru in every respect, both in material and spiritual terms and yet he gives you advice? Doesn’t he know his own worth? You are my teacher; you are an authority. And yet, like an impudent child, he is giving instructions even to someone as qualified as you.” (Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.4.158-60)

When Sanatan heard Mahaprabhu criticize Jagadananda in this way, he took it as another sign of the Pandit’s great fortune on the one hand and his own misfortune on the other.

“You accept Jagadananda into your inner circle while venerating me. It is as though you were giving him ambrosia to drink and me the bitter juice of neem and tobacco leaves.” (Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.4.163)

Even after hearing these words, Mahaprabhu continued to take Jagadananda’s actions as a sign of impudence. Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur has written in this connection, “Everyone has a certain status. If someone thinks that he is more important than he really is, he transgresses the lines of etiquette which are prescribed by seniority, etc., and gives advice to someone to

whom he should rather offer respect. Mahaprabhu did not encourage such transgressions, but rather sought to discourage a younger devotee like Jagadananda from behaving in this way.”

The Lord further prohibited anyone from looking upon Sanatan’s body as material.

“You take your body to be disgusting, whereas I think that your body is like nectar. Your body is transcendental, never material, but you conceive of it in material terms.” (Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.4.172-3)

When Hari Das Thakur objected that the Lord was exaggerating out of his own mercy, the Lord laughed and explained to him and Sanatan as follows:

“My dear Hari Das and Sanatan, I think of you as my adopted children and of myself as your maintainer. The maintainer never takes seriously any faults of the maintained. I never think of myself as deserving of respect, but because of affection I always consider you to be like my little boys. Even when a child passes stool and urine that touch her body, a mother never hates the child. On the contrary, she takes much pleasure in cleansing him and takes his filth to be like sandalwood pulp. Similarly, I felt no disgust at being touched by the fluids oozing from Sanatan’s itches.” (Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.4.184-7)

Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu went on to say,

“The body of a devotee is never material. It is considered to be transcendental, full of spiritual bliss. At the time of initiation, when a devotee fully surrenders unto the service of the Lord, Krishna accepts him to be as good as himself. When the devotee's body is thus transformed into ecstatic spiritual existence, he is able to render service to the lotus feet of the Lord... Krishna produced scabies on Sanatan’s body and sent him here to test me. Had I refused to embrace him out of disgust, I would certainly have committed an offense to Krishna himself. This is the body of an associate of Krishna. It has no foul odor coming from it. On the first day that I embraced him, I smelled the aroma of catuḥsama [a mixture of sandalwood pulp, camphor, aguru and musk].” (Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.4.191-7)

This time, when the Lord embraced Sanatan, the foul itches which covered his

body immediately disappeared and his skin took on an effulgent golden glow.

## **Jagadananda and Sanatan in Vraja**

Sanatan stayed a full year in Puri, after which Mahaprabhu told him to return to Vrindavan. He bid the Lord goodbye after the *Ḍolayatṛa* and took the jungle path to Vrindavan. Rupa Goswami joined him there not long afterward. When Raghunath Bhatta Goswami came to Vrindavan on Mahaprabhu's order, he stayed with Rupa and Sanatan and daily recited the *Bhagavat* for them in a sweet voice.

Some time later, Jagadananda Pandit took permission from Mahaprabhu to come to Vrindavan. When he came there, he met Sanatan who was overjoyed to see him. The two of them went together on a tour of the twelve forests of Vraja. Sanatan encouraged Jagadananda to stay with him in Gokula where he was settled at that time. Even though they dwelt together, they ate separately. Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur writes in his *Amṛta-pravaha-bhaṣya*, "Sanatan had become habituated to the madhukari system and lived on a few pieces of bread each day. Jagadananda, however, could not live without eating rice, and so he went every day to a nearby temple to cook. In those days, even in the temples of Vraja, rice and dahl were not regularly offered to the deities."

One day, Jagadananda invited Sanatan to eat with him. Sanatan desired to show the world the extent of Jagadananda's devotion to Mahaprabhu. So when he came to eat Jagadananda's offering, he wore around his head a saffron cloth which had been given to him by a certain Mukunda Saraswati. When Jagadananda learned that the cloth was not a gift from Mahaprabhu, he was so angry with Sanatan that he took the pot in which the rice had been cooking and threatened to hit him with it. He said,

"You are Mahaprabhu's most important associate. No one is dearer to him than you. How could anyone tolerate you wearing another sannyasi's cloth around your head?" (Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.13.56-7)

Sanatan answered by praising Jagadananda's exclusive dedication to Gauranga

Mahaprabhu:

“Well said! It is clear, Pandit Mahasaya, that you are unequalled in your love for the Lord. Only from you could I have learned this lesson, for you alone have such solid faith in the Lord.. My purpose in binding the cloth around my head has been realized, for as soon as you saw it, I was able to witness the manifestations of your love for the Lord. A Vaishnava should not wear a red-colored cloth. I will give it to someone else, for I have no further need for it.”  
(Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.13.56-61)

Jagadananda stayed in Vraja for two months, after which he was no longer able to tolerate being separated from Mahaprabhu. He took leave of Sanatan and headed in the direction of Jagannath Puri. As they bid each other goodbye, as gifts for Mahaprabhu, Sanatan gave him sand from the place where Krishna held the rasa dance, a stone from Govardhana, a garland of gunja berries and some dried ripe pilu fruits. Jagadananda gave all these gifts to Mahaprabhu upon his arrival in Puri; he and his devotees especially enjoyed the pilu fruits.

### **Sanatan’s service to the Lord**

Mahaprabhu gave Sanatan four responsibilities: (1) to preach pure devotional service by establishing the doctrines of pure devotion; (2) to discover and make known the various places where Krishna had his pastimes; (3) to establish the service of the deity of Krishna in Vrindavan; and (4), to establish proper Vaishnava behavior through compiling a Vaishnava rule book or *smṛti*, and in this way make the foundations of a Vaishnava society.

“O Sanatan, you should broadcast the revealed scriptures on devotional service and excavate the lost places of pilgrimage in the district of Mathura. Establish the deity service of Lord Krishna in Vrindavan. You should also compile a scripture containing the rules of devotional practice and preach these practices.”  
(Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.23.97-8)

In following the instructions to broadcast the revealed scriptures on pure devotional service and to establish the foundations of proper Vaishnava practice and etiquette, Sanatan wrote four books, all of which are considered to be jewels by the devotees. He wrote (1) a commentary on the Haribhakti-vilasa known as Digdarsani, (2) a commentary on the tenth canto of the Srimad Bhagavatam known as the Bṛhad-Vaishnava-Toṣaṇi, (3) Lila-stava or Dasama-carita, and (4) Bṛhad-Bhagavatamṛta, to which he added a commentary. Mahaprabhu himself gave directions to Sanatan about the contents of the Hari-bhakti-vilasa, which is the smṛti scripture, or rule book for the external practices to be followed by the devotees.

Sanatan spent a great deal of time searching out the various holy spots in the land of Vraja. He also established the service of the Madana Mohana deity. Srila Sanatan Goswami founded a maṭh in Vrindavan at the place known as Dvadasaditya Ṭila. He first had a temple built there for Radha-Madana Mohana. It is said that a rich officer in the Sultan's army named Krishna Das Kapura built the temple and a kitchen and financed an opulent standard of worship for the deity. He later became Sanatan Goswami's disciple.

When Sanatan Goswami was staying in Gokula Mahavana, he saw Madana Gopal playing with a group of cowherd boys at Ramaṇareti. Narahari Chakravarti has given a beautiful description of this vision in his Bhakti-ratnakara:

O Srinivas, just look at this place. Sanatan Goswami used to live here. All the fortunate residents of Mahavana would be revitalized by seeing him. He joyfully lived in Mahavana looking upon his Madana Gopal deity. Madana Gopal enjoyed playing on the sandy beaches which line the Yamuna, known as Ramaṇa Reti. One day he came to that divine riverbank with the children of Mahavana, himself taking the form of a cowherd boy. Sanatan watched him as he played various childhood games with the other children and thought, "This is no ordinary child." When the children had finished playing and were leaving, Sanatan followed them. The child entered into the temple and when Sanatan followed him inside, he saw no one but the deity of Madana Mohana. He paid his obeisances to the deity and then returned to his own dwelling without saying anything to anyone. So this is how Madana Mohan showed himself to be under the control of Sanatan's love. Sanatan's wondrous character has thus filled the



three worlds. (Bhakti-ratnakara 5.177-186)

### **Sanatan's glorious pastimes in Vraja**

Krishnadas Kaviraj Goswami has described in his Chaitanya Charitamrita how Rupa and Sanatan Goswami worshiped Krishna in the land of Vraja:

These brothers have no fixed residence. They spend each night beneath a different tree in the forest, one night under one tree and the next under another. Sometimes, they begged dry food from a Brahmin's house and sometimes cooked food like dry bread and fried chick-peas. This is how they have given up all kinds of material enjoyments. They wrap themselves in a quilt and wear nothing but a piece of torn cloth, claiming nothing but a waterpot as a possession. They engage almost twenty-four hours daily in rendering service to the Lord by chanting the holy names of Krishna and discussing his pastimes or dancing in great jubilation. They spend only an hour and a half in sleep, and some days, when overcome by the love of chanting the Lord's holy name, they do not sleep at all. Sometimes they write transcendental works about divine aesthetics, and sometimes they listen to talks about Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu or spend their time thinking about the Lord. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.19.127-31)

While staying at Cakratirtha near Govardhana, Sanatan would regularly circumambulate the mountain. As he grew older, he became too weak to walk these 14 miles on a daily basis without becoming excessively fatigued. One day, Gopinath himself came in the form of a cowherd boy to fan him when he became too tired from walking. After refreshing Sanatan in this way, the boy climbed onto the hill and brought down a stone marked with Krishna's footprint. He gave the stone to Sanatan and said, "You have grown old. There is no need for you to trouble yourself to this extent any longer. I am giving you this stone from Govardhana. If you circumambulate this stone, you can consider yourself to have circumambulated Govardhana itself." Then he disappeared. No longer able to see the charming form of the cowherd boy, Sanatan was overwhelmed with pain and began to cry. This story has also been told in the Bhakti-ratnakara (5.728-741).

Cakratirtha is on the northern shore of Manasi Ganga. There is a temple dedicated to Cakresvara Shiva, or as he is popularly known, Caklesvara Mahadeva. Sanatan's bhajana-kuṭīra was under a neem tree which stood in front of this temple. Just north of this place is a temple which houses Gaura-Nityananda. Sanatan Prabhu's Govardhana-sila is currently kept in the Radha-Damodar temple at Radha Kund.

There are more stories about the glories of Cakratirtha. When Sanatan first came to this place, there were so many mosquitos that he was unable to concentrate while meditating on the Holy Name or writing transcendental literature, so much so that he decided to move. That night, Cakresvara appeared to Sanatan in a dream and told him not to worry about the problem. He would be able to engage in his worship without disturbance. From that night on, there were no more mosquitos at Cakratirtha.

Srila Sanatan Goswami also spent some time living in a cottage on the banks of Pavana Sarovara near Nandagrama. Here also he was granted a vision of Krishna as a cowherd boy, who gave him milk and told him to build a hut and engage in his worship there. One day, Rupa invited Sanatan to come and eat with him. For this occasion, he wished to prepare sweet rice, but he did not have the necessary ingredients. Srimati Radharani took the form of a young cowherd girl and came to Rupa with milk, sugar, rice and ghee, in short, giving him everything he needed to make the preparation for Sanatan's pleasure. Rupa Goswami cooked the sweet rice and after offering it to the deity, gave the prasada to Sanatan. Sanatan found that after relishing the delicious sweet rice, he was overcome by uncontrollable waves of ecstasy. Suspecting that something unusual had taken place, he asked Rupa where the ingredients had come from. When Rupa told him about the little cowherd girl, Sanatan immediately realized that it had been Radha. Because Radha was their goddess and they were her servants, the proper relation of served and servant had been reversed. He therefore strictly forbade Rupa from accepting such gifts in the future.(Bhakti-ratnakara 5.1311-30)

Another legend told about Sanatan is the following. Once there was a very poor devotee of Shiva, whose name, according to the Bhaktamala and Gauḍiṇī Vaiṣṇava Abhidhana, was Sri Jivana Chakravarti. Originally from the village of Manakara in Burdwan district in Bengal, he had spent many years worshipping Shiva in Benares, praying to him for wealth. Finally, one night Shiva appeared to him in a dream and told him to go to Sanatan in Vrindavan, for he was in

possession of a great wealth which he would share with him.

The poor Brahmin immediately set off for Vrindavan where he found Sanatan deep in meditation. However, when he saw the Goswami, thin and dressed in a dirty loincloth, he began to doubt that he could give him the desired riches. Even so, he told Sanatan about the dream. Sanatan heard the Brahmin and came back to external consciousness. He answered saying that he lived by begging a few crumbs from a number of different houses, how could he possibly give him the riches he desired?

The poor Brahmin was disappointed and turned away, thinking that perhaps the message Shiva had given him in the dream had just been an illusion. Meanwhile, Sanatan pondered why Shiva had sent the Brahmin to him. As he ruminated, he remembered a philosopher's stone that was lying in a pile of rubbish and had long since been covered in dust. As soon as he remembered the existence of this valuable jewel, he sent someone to fetch the Brahmin and told him to take the jewel from the rubbish heap. When the Brahmin saw the touchstone, he was overjoyed and thought, now there will be no one as rich as I in the entire world! After walking some distance away, however, he began to wonder why Sanatan had completely forgotten about such a valuable possession. Indeed, if he cared so little for the philosopher's stone, he must have something even more valuable. Perhaps he had been cheated! He wanted to know what riches Sanatan possessed that he cared so little for the touchstone.

The Brahmin quickly ran back to Sanatan and expressed his doubts, asking him if he had anything more valuable in his possession. Then Sanatan told him that there was no greater wealth than love for Krishna and that material goods were insignificant and simply a cause of greater distress. The Brahmin then bowed his head and prayed to Sanatan to please give him the wealth which made him consider even a touchstone insignificant. Sanatan was moved by his prayer and mercifully bestowed upon him the riches of Krishna-prema.

Sanatan Goswami's samadhi tomb is found next to the old Radha-Madana Mohana temple in Vrindavan. He left this world on the full moon day of Asharh in the Saka year 1480 (1558 AD).

**Sri Raghunath Bhatta Goswami**

raghunathakhyako bhaṭṭaḥ pura ya raga-manjari |

kṛta-sri-radhika-kunḍa-kuṭira-vasatiḥ sa tu ||

In Krishna-lila, Raghunath Bhatta, who made his home in a cottage by Radha Kund, was Raga Manjari. (Gaura-gaṇoddesa-dipika 185)

### **Serving the Lord in Benares**

In around 1503 AD, Raghunath Bhattacharya appeared as the son of Tapan Mishra, a dear devotee of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu who hailed from the village of Ramapura on the banks of the Padma River in East Bengal. Mahaprabhu first met Tapan Mishra when he went to East Bengal during his career as a teacher of Sanskrit. Tapan Mishra had studied many scriptures but was still bewildered about the purpose of life and what to do to attain it. He had a dream in which he was instructed by a Brahmin to go to Nimai Pandit who would clarify these matters for him. When Tapan Mishra went to the Lord and told him of his dream, Nimai answered that Harinama-sankirtana was both the purpose of life and the means for attaining it. Tapan Mishra expressed his desire to come and live in Nabadwip near the Lord, but Mahaprabhu told him to go to Benares instead, assuring him that he would see him there one day. Thus, several years later, when passing through Benares on his way back from Vrindavan, Mahaprabhu stayed at Chandrasekhara Vaidya's house and took his meals with Tapan Mishra.

The Lord had three devotees in Benares. One was Chandrasekhara Vaidya, another Tapan Mishra. The third was Tapan Mishra's son Raghunath Bhattacharya. The Lord met with them when he stopped in Kashi after visiting Vrindavan. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 1.11.152-3)

Sri Raghunath Bhatta Goswami lived at home for about 28 years. During the two

months that the Lord spent in Benares, Raghunath had many opportunities to personally serve him and to receive his mercy.

Mahaprabhu stayed in the house of Chandrasekhara for two months' time, daily taking his meals at Tapana Mishra's residence. Raghunath was just a boy at the time, but he served the Lord by cleaning his place after he ate and by massaging his feet. When he grew up, he went to Puri to see the Lord. He stayed there for eight months, occasionally cooking for the Lord. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 1.11.154-6)

### **Raghunath comes to Puri**

Out of eagerness to see the Lord, Raghunath Bhatta hurried to Puri after visiting Bengal. He was accompanied by a servant who carried his baggage for him. While travelling, he met a certain Rama Das Visvasa, a Rama devotee initiated in the Ramanandi disciplic succession and very learned in Sanskrit poetics and other scriptures. He was a well-to-do member of the kayastha caste who had an important position in the government treasury as he was trusted by the Shah. Rama Das was travelling to Puri as he wanted to renounce his material entanglements and visit Jagannath Deva. He was constantly chanting the Rama mantra. Knowing Raghunath to be a Brahmin, he took many pains to render service to him, sometimes massaging his feet, sometimes carrying his baggage on his head. Raghunath was somewhat embarrassed that such a rich and important man should be rendering him such menial service, but Rama Das tried to allay his doubts by saying, "I am a lowly sudra and you are a Brahmin. It is my duty to serve you. I feel the greatest joy in having this opportunity to serve you."

When Raghunath arrived in Puri, he prostrated himself on the ground before the feet of the Lord. The Lord recognized Raghunath and with great emotion lifted him up and embraced him. He inquired after Tapana Mishra and Chandrasekhara Vaidya, then sent him to see Jagannath, telling him to come and eat with him afterward. Mahaprabhu had Govinda make housing arrangements for Raghunath and introduced him to Svarupa Damodar and his other associates.

During the eight months that Sri Raghunath Bhatta Goswami remained in Nilachala, he sometimes had the chance to invite Mahaprabhu for meals. He would take the opportunity to cook delicious vegetable platters for the Lord's pleasure. He was an expert cook and the Lord was especially satisfied by the devotional mood in which he prepared these meals. Raghunath was then fortunate enough to be able to take the Lord's remnants. Rama Das Visvasa also came to meet Mahaprabhu during this time, but the Lord could see through him. He saw that Rama Das harbored desires for liberation and that he was proud of his learning, and so he did not show him as much mercy as he did to Raghunath.

After Raghunath had been in Puri for eight months, the Lord told him to go back to Kashi to serve his Vaishnava parents, who were now aged and infirm. He also told him not to get married. The Lord then made him a gift of his own neckbeads, which he placed around Raghunath's neck, telling him to come to Puri again.

### **Raghunath goes to Vrindavan**

Raghunath took care of his parents for the remainder of their lives, which was another four years. During this time, he also studied the Bhagavat from a Vaishnava. When his parents died, he returned to Puri and stayed with Mahaprabhu. After staying with the Lord for eight months, Mahaprabhu told him to go to Vrindavan and to stay with Rupa and Sanatan. He told him to continue studying and giving discourses on the Bhagavat as well as to chant the Holy Names. The Lord then gave him a ten-foot long tulasi garland which had been worn by Lord Jagannath as well as some pan which had none of the intoxicating spices in it. Raghunath was intoxicated with love upon receiving all these kindnesses from the Lord.

Raghunath had a beautiful singing voice. When he recited the Bhagavat, he would read the same verse aloud over and over again, chanting it in different tunes. As soon as they heard it, the devotees were attracted.

“Study Srimad Bhagavatam and chant the names of Krishna continuously. The Supreme Lord Krishna will very soon bestow his mercy upon you.” After saying

this, the Lord embraced Raghunath who was enlivened with ecstatic love for Krishna by his mercy. At a feast, the Lord had been given some unspiced betel and a ten-foot garland of tulasi leaves long which had been worn by Lord Jagannath. He gave the garland and betel to Raghunath Bhatta, who accepted them as his worshipable deity, taking care to preserve them. Then Raghunath took the Lord's permission and departed for Vrindavan.

When he arrived there, he put himself under the care of Rupa and Sanatan Goswamis. Whenever he recited the Bhagavat before Rupa and Sanatan, Raghunath Bhatta would be overwhelmed with ecstatic love for Krishna. By Mahaprabhu's mercy, he experienced the symptoms of ecstatic love--tears, trembling, and faltering of the voice. His eyes filled with tears, his throat became choked, and thus he would have to stop his recital. His voice was as sweet as a cuckoo's, and he would recite each verse of the Bhagavat in three or four tunes. Whenever he recited or heard about Krishna's beauty and sweetness, he would be overwhelmed with ecstatic love and become oblivious to the world around him.

Raghunath Bhatta surrendered himself to Govinda's lotus feet and those lotus feet were the only thing which gave his life meaning. In time, Raghunath Bhatta ordered his disciples to construct a temple for Govinda. He himself made various ornaments for the deity, including a flute and dolphin-shaped earrings.

Raghunath Bhatta would never speak or listen to gossip. He would simply discuss Krishna and worship the Lord day and night. He would not listen to criticism of a Vaishnava's misbehavior. He knew only that everyone was engaged in Krishna's service. When Raghunath Bhatta Goswami was absorbed in remembrance of Lord Krishna, he would take the prasadi tulasi garland and the neckbeads given to him by the Lord, wearing them around his neck. Thus I have described the power of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's mercy, by which Raghunath Bhatta Goswami experienced unlimited ecstatic love for Krishna. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.13.121-135)

The following description is also given of Sri Raghunath Bhatta Goswami is given in the Bhakti-ratnakara:

“As I look upon the samadhi tomb of Raghunath Bhatta, my heart breaks and my eyes are awash with tears. But who is not overjoyed as soon as he hears Raghunath Bhatta Goswami's glories? He was such an expert teacher of all the

scriptures that even Br̥haspati would joyfully cheer upon hearing Raghunath's explanations of Vaishnava doctrine. There is nothing to which his discourses on the Bhagavat can be compared. Even Vyasa himself wishes to sit and listen to him speak, knowing that this will bring him happiness. Even the gods were astonished when they observed his devotional practices." When the devotees heard Srinivas Acharya glorify Sri Raghunath Bhatta Goswami in this way, they fell to the ground and offered their respects. Then they continued on to the Govindaji temple.

Sri Raghunath Bhatta Goswami disappeared in about 1579 or 1580 AD.

## **Srila Gopal Bhatta Goswami**

anaṅga-manjari yasit sadya gopala-bhaṭṭakaḥ |

bhaṭṭa-gosvamināṁ kecit ahuḥ sri-guṇa-manjari ||

She who was formerly Anaṅga Manjari has appeared to enrich Mahaprabhu's pastimes as Srila Gopal Bhatta Goswami. Some say that Gopal Bhatta is actually Guṇa Manjari. (Gaura-gaṇoddesa-dipika 184)

Srila Gopal Bhatta Goswami appeared in 1500 AD (though, according to some authorities, he was born in 1503) as the son of Veṅkaṭa Bhatta in the town of Sriraṅgam in South India. Their residence was in a village not far from Sriraṅgam called Belaguṇḍi.

According to Narahari in the Bhakti-ratnakara, Srila Gopal Bhatta Goswami was given a vision in a dream by Mahaprabhu in which he was fortunate enough to witness all the Lord's Nabadwip pastimes. An eternal associate of Krishna, he appeared in a faraway place in order to participate in Lord Gauranga's pastimes. Even so, he was able to know long before he even saw him that the Lord had appeared and taken sannyas. Gopal Bhatta did not



particularly like the Lord's appearance as a sannyasi. He was distressed and crying alone when the Lord appeared to him and gave him the dream vision of his Nabadwip lila. In this vision, the Lord was overwhelmed by ecstatic love, embraced him and drenched him in his tears.

Having said this to Gopal, the Lord embraced him and drenched him in his tears. He then told him to keep all these experiences secret, and Gopal felt great joy in his mind. (Bhakti-ratnakara 1.123-4)

### **The Lord's teachings to Gopal's father**

In 1510, Mahaprabhu made his auspicious appearance in the pilgrimage city of Srirangam. He was invited by Veṅkaṭa Bhatta to spend the four months of the Caturmasya in his house. Knowing him to be a strict Vaishnava, Mahaprabhu accepted his invitation. In fact, the Lord's pastime of coming to Srirangam and staying at Veṅkaṭa Bhatta's home was to give his mercy to Gopal Bhatta and his family, for the Lord knew that Gopal, his eternal companion, had appeared there.

At this time, Gopal Bhatta was still a young boy. He was fortunate enough to be able to serve the Lord by massaging his feet. Even though he was satisfied with Veṅkaṭa Bhatta and his family's service, the Lord observed that Veṅkaṭa had an element of pride in his object of worship. He believed that his worshipable deity, Lakshmi-Narayan, was the supreme worshipable object, that Narayan was the source of all other incarnations, including Krishna, Rama and Nrisingha. His reasoning was that Narayan is never born, he is aja, while Krishna and Rama take birth in the world. He thus thought, "Mahaprabhu worships Krishna, the incarnation of Narayan, while we worship Narayan, the source of all incarnations."

Madhusudana is the destroyer of false pride, and Mahaprabhu finally decided one day that he would do the same for Veṅkaṭa. He asked him in a bantering tone, "Veṅkaṭa, I hear that no one is equal in opulence to your Lord Narayan; the same is true for your worshipable goddess Lakṣmī Devi. On the other hand, the object of my worship, Krishna, has no opulences of any kind. He wears garlands of wild forest flowers and uses peacock feathers for decoration.

He is the son of Nanda Gopa, and spends his day grazing the cows with the other cowherd boys. My worshipable goddesses, the gopis, are also nothing but poor cowherd girls. I wonder, therefore, why your worshipable Lakshmi Devi came to Vrindavan to perform austerities in the hope of gaining Krishna's company in the rasa dance."

Veṅkaṭa immediately answered, "What's wrong with that? Radha's beloved Krishna is not different from Lakshmi Devi's husband Narayan.

siddhantatas tv abhede 'pi srisa-kṛṣṇa-Svarupayoḥ |

rasenotkṛṣyate kṛṣṇaḥ kṛṣṇa-rupam eṣa rasa-sthitiḥ ||

"Though according to theological doctrine, Krishna and the husband of Lakshmi are identical in essence, the form of Krishna is superior when analyzed from the point of view of divine sentiment. This is the conclusion based on the analysis of divine sentiment. (Brs 1.2.59)

"Since the divine sentiment in Krishna is superior, there is no fault if Lakshmi Devi chooses to seek his association and performs austerities to that end."

Mahaprabhu answered, "I am not saying that there is any fault. I agree that from the transcendental point of view, Krishna and Narayan are identical. The difference between them is based on an analysis of sacred rapture. When the Lord performs pastimes of opulence, he is Narayan. When he performs pastimes of sweetness, he is Krishna. She who is Radha in Krishna's pastimes is Lakshmi in the pastimes of Narayan. Thus, when Lakshmi performs austerities to have the association of Krishna there is no question of her breaking her vows of fidelity to her husband. Thus, she went to perform these austerities in Vrindavan. But I have another question for you: Why, even after trying so hard through such penances, etc., to enter Krishna's rasa-lila, was Lakshmi still unable to do so?"

Veṅkaṭa Bhatta was terribly distressed at being unable to give the Lord an answer. Mahaprabhu observed his distress and tried to pacify him by saying, "You yourself said that Narayan and Krishna are identical from the theological point of view, but that the superiority of Krishna is determined by an analysis of

the divine sentiments. Narayan is involved in two and a half of the five principle rasas, whereas Krishna is experienced through the complete manifestation of all twelve rasas, the five principle and seven secondary sentiments. Since Narayan's lila is primarily one of opulence and majesty, his principle devotee is Lakshmi, who also worships him in the appropriate mood of awe and reverence. The same Lakshmi Devi is Radhika in order to heighten the experience of romantic love. Unless one follows in the footsteps of Radha and her expansions, the gopis, who are the repositories of the erotic sentiment, then it is impossible to relish Krishna's sweet qualities, i.e., those virtues which are particularly inspiring for the romantic mood of love. The reason for Lakshmi Devi's failure is that she did not follow in the gopis' footsteps, but continued to perform her austerities in the mood of awe and reverence. As a result, she repeatedly found herself in the company of Narayan and never in that of Krishna. By way of contrast, the Srutis followed the gopis in the raga-marga and so were ultimately able to achieve Krishna's service in the erotic mood. As long as one continues to think of Krishna in majestic terms as lord and creator of the universe, one cannot possibly worship in the spirit of raganuga bhakti.

“Krishna has one extraordinary characteristic: by his sweetness he attracts the minds of the entire world. By taking on the mood of the Vraja gopis one can attain to his lotus feet--the people of Vraja have no idea that Kṛṣṇa is the lord and creator of the universe. Some think of him as their son and even tie him to a mortar, while others take him to be their friend and climb on his shoulders. The people of Vraja only know him as the son of Nanda, whereas in the attitude of awe and reverence, the devotee does not have a concept of such a relationship to him. One who takes the attitude of a resident of Vraja will attain Krishna as the son of the king of Vraja in Vrindavan. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.9.127-31)

“When the gopis, the objects of my worship, were abandoned by Krishna in the rasa dance they began to cry in the intensity of their distress at not seeing him. Krishna came to them in the form of Narayan, but the gopis simply paid their obeisances and moved on in search of Krishna, showing absolutely no interest in him as a lover. When Radharani stood before the disguised Krishna, however, he could not maintain the four-armed form but once again appeared in his form as the holder of the flute. Such is the power of Radharani's love!”<sup>11712</sup> The place where this happened is near Govardhana and is called Paisa-dhama or Paiṭha-dhama, which means “the place of entering” because Krishna's two extra arms merged back into his body here.<sup>11712</sup>

“Nandanandana Krishna is the avatari, or source of all incarnations. Narayan, Rama, Nrisingha, etc., are all his incarnations and expansions. Krishna is svayaṁ bhagavan, the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

“From his being the Supreme Personality of Godhead other forms of Godhead are also given the appellation of bhagavan. He alone however can be called the svayaṁ bhagavan, or primeval supreme lord. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 1.2.88)

ete caṁsakalaḥ puṁsaḥ kṛṣṇas tu bhagavan svayam |

indrari-vyakulaṁ lokaṁ mṛdayanti yuge yuge ||

All of the previously mentioned forms of the Lord are either plenary or partial expansions. Krishna alone is the original personality of the Godhead. He and his expansions appear in every age to bring joy to this world when tormented by the enemies of the gods. (SB 1.3.28)

## **Gopal’s guru**

Through the power of Sri Krishna Chaitanya Mahaprabhu’s merciful association, Veṅkaṭa Bhatta, his brother Prabodhananda Saraswati, his son Gopal Bhatta Goswami, and all the other members of his family, were inspired to give up the worship of Lakshmi-Narayan and became engaged in the exclusive devotional service of Radha and Krishna. Srila Gopal Bhatta Goswami took initiation from his uncle, Tridaṇḍi Yati Srimat Prabodhananda Saraswati. Proof of this is found in the Hari-bhakti-vilasa:

bhakter vilasaṁś cinute prabodha-

nandasya śiṣyo bhagavat-priyasya |

gopala-bhaṭṭo raghunatha-dasaṁ

santoṣayan rupa-sanatanau ca ||

Gopal Bhatta, the disciple of Prabodhananda who is dear to the Lord, has collected these devotional activities to satisfy Raghunath Das, Rupa and Sanatan Goswamis. (Hbv 1.2)

Gopal's parents were very fortunate, for they surrendered themselves, life and soul, to the feet of Lord Chaitanya. They ordered their son to go to Vrindavan before they left this world, absorbed in meditating on the Lord. Gopal travelled directly to Vrindavan where he met with Rupa and Sanatan. (Bhakti-ratnakara 1.163-5)

### **Gopal Bhatta comes to Vrindavan**

When Gopal arrived in Vrindavan, Rupa and Sanatan wrote to Mahaprabhu to tell him. The Lord was overjoyed and immediately wrote back telling them to affectionately take care of him as though he were their own younger brother. Srila Sanatan Goswami compiled the Hari-bhakti-vilasa and published it in Srila Gopal Bhatta Goswami's name. Rupa Goswami considered Gopal to be as dear to him as his own life and engaged him in the deity worship of Radha Ramaṇa.

Srila Gopal Bhatta Goswami became one of the Six Goswamis, but he always kept an attitude of meekness and humility. Thus, when Krishnadas Kaviraj approached him for permission to write the Chaitanya Charitamrita, he granted it, but under the condition that he not write about him. Krishnadas Kaviraj Goswami could not go against the order of Gopal Bhatta and thus did nothing more than mention his name. Sri Jiva Goswami writes in the introduction to the Ṣaṭ-sandarbha that he wrote it on the basis of an earlier text by Gopal Bhatta. Srila Gopal Bhatta Goswami also wrote a book called the Sat-kriya-sara-dipika ("Light on the essential sacraments for the Vaishnavas"). Thus his contribution to Gaudiya Vaishnava literature was in editing the Hari-bhakti-

vilasa, preparing the notes for Jiva's Ṣaṭ-sandarbhā and in compiling the Sat-kriyā-sara-dīpikā. He also gave great joy to the community of devotees by writing a commentary on Bilvamaṅgala's Krishna-karṇāmṛta.

Amongst his disciples were Srinivas Acharya and Sri Gopinath Pujari. The following story is told about Gopinath Pujari becoming Gopal Bhatta's disciple. One day, Gopal Bhatta went to visit the town of Saharāṇapura, not far from Haridvara. On that occasion, a simple, devoted Brahmin engaged in his service in a most unpretentious manner. He had no children, but desired to have a son. Śrīla Gopal Bhatta Goswami knew the desire of the Brahmin and blessed him that he would have a devotionally minded male child. The Brahmin promised Gopal Bhatta that he would give him his first son to be his servant and disciple. This son was Gopinath Pujari.

It is said that Mahāprabhu had such affection for Gopal Bhatta that he sent him his own belt and kaupina as well as a wooden seat which he had used. These items are still worshiped in the Rādhā Rāmaṇa temple by the current sevāits.

### **Sri Sri Rādhā Rāmaṇa**

When Śrīla Gopal Bhatta Goswami was visiting the pilgrimage centres of northern India, he found a Salāgrama Sila on the banks of the Gaṇḍakī River. He took the worshipable stone and carried it with him wherever he went, treating it as Vrajendranandana Krishna himself. One day he thought that he would like to worship the Lord in a deity form so that he could expand his service. On the very next day, he found that the Salāgrama Sila had transformed itself into Rādhā Rāmaṇa to fulfill the wish of his devotee. This deity stands alone without any form of Rādhā standing by his side. Instead, as a symbol of Rādhārāṇī, a silver crown is placed on his left side.

The story is also told in the following way. It is said that Śrīla Gopal Bhatta Goswami used to daily worship twelve Salāgramas. He developed a desire to serve the Lord in the form of a deity, thinking that in this way he would be able to worship him in a much better way. The Lord within his heart knew his feelings and through a rich merchant had many beautiful items used in the

worship of the deity, such as ornaments and clothes, sent to him. Gopal began to worry that all these beautiful objects would be wasted because there was no way that he could use them unless he had a deity in human form. That night, he put the Salagramas to rest and in the morning he saw that one of them had been transformed into the Radha Ramaṇa deity.

When Rupa and Sanatan heard that Krishna had so mercifully appeared to Gopal Bhatta, they immediately came with the other devotees for darshan, and when they saw him, they were ecstatic with love. The annual festival commemorating Radha Ramaṇa's appearance, when he is bathed publicly, takes place on the full moon day of Vaishakh. The Radha Ramaṇa temple is considered one of the most important in Vrindavan.

Srila Gopal Bhatta Goswami ended his earthly pastimes on the Kṛṣṇa Pancami of Aṣāḍh of 1507 of the Saka era (1585 AD). His samadhi temple is behind the current Radha Ramaṇa temple. By reading Srinivas Acharya's hymn to the Six Goswamis, Ṣaḍ-gosvamy-aṣṭaka, we can understand their glories.

## **Srila Prabodhananda Saraswati**

tuṅgavidya vraje yasit sarva-sastra-visarada |

sa prabodhananda-yatir gaurodgana-sarasvati ||

The gopi Tuṅgavadya, who was most learned in all the scriptures, has today become the sannyasi Prabodhananda, whose words are all used in the glorification of Lord Gauranga.

Veṅkaṭa Bhatta lived in South India. He held a special position amongst the Brahmins as he was very learned in all the scriptures.

There was a Vaishnava of the Sri-sampradaya named Veṅkaṭa Bhatta who

respectfully invited the Lord to his house. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.9.82)

In his commentary to this verse of the Chaitanya-caritamṛta, Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur has written: “Veṅkaṭa Bhatta, Trimalla Bhatta and Prabodhananda Saraswati were previously acharyas of the Sri-sampradaya. Gopal Bhatta Goswami was the son of Veṅkaṭa Bhatta.”

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur has also commented on the same verse: “Sri Veṅkaṭa Bhatta was a Brahmin of the Sri-sampradaya who lived in Sriraṅgam. [FN: Sriraṅgam is situated on the Kaveri River near Trichinopoly. It is about ten miles from Kumbhakonam in the Tanjor district of Tamil Nadu. The temple of Sri Raṅganatha is the largest temple in India.] Because Sriraṅgam is situated in Tamil Nadu, people no longer use the names Veṅkaṭa and Tirumalai (Trimalla). This family had possibly moved to Sriraṅgam not long before Mahaprabhu’s visit there. Veṅkaṭa Bhatta belonged to the Vāṇḍalāi branch of the Ramanua sampradaya. One of his brothers was the tridaṇḍi sannyasi, Prabodhananda, who acted as an acharya of the school. Veṅkaṭa Bhatta’s son was Gopal Bhatta Goswami.”

Previously, these three brothers were worshipers of Lakshmi Narayan, but they were converted to the worship of Radha and Krishna by the grace of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. Krishnadas Kaviraj Goswami has described this conversion in his Chaitanya Charitamrita.

Srila Prabodhananda Saraswati’s disciple was his own nephew, Gopal Bhatta, one of the six Goswamis.

bhakter vilasaṁs cinute prabodha-  
nandasya siṣyo bhagavat-priyasya |  
gopala-bhaṭṭo raghunatha-dasaṁ  
santoṣayan rupa-sanatanau ca ||

Gopal Bhatta, the disciple of Prabodhananda who is dear to the Lord, has compiled these devotional activities to satisfy Raghunath Das, Rupa and Sanatan Goswamis. (Hbv 1.2)



Srila Prabodhananda Saraswati wrote a number of books, including Vrindavan-sataka, Nabadwip-sataka, Radha-rasa-sudhanidhi, Chaitanya-candramṛta, which are especially loved by rasika devotees. Some of his other titles are Saṅgita-Madhava, Ascarya-rasa-prabandha, Sruti-stuti-vyakhya, Gitagovinda-vyakhyana and Kama-bija-kama-gayatri-vyakhyana.

## **Is Prabodhananda Prakashananda?**

In the third chapter of the Madhya-khaṇḍa of the Chaitanya Bhagavat, Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur comments as follows:  
“Prakashananda was a teacher of the mayavada doctrine and a sannyasi. While discoursing on the Veda, he cuts up my divine and transcendental body into pieces. Some inexperienced people say that this Prakashananda is the same person as the Prabodhananda, the younger brother of Venkṛṣṭa Bhatta who lived on the banks of the Kaveri. This error has entered into the sahajiya book named Bhaktamal, and the same erroneous belief has entered into the writings of many modern scholars also.” (Gauḍiya-bhaṣya, Madhya-khaṇḍa, 3.37.)

That which Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur has indicated in this commentary is quite true. Ashutosh Deb has written in his dictionary under the rubric, Prabodhananda Saraswati, “A Vaishnava philosopher whose real name was Prakashananda Saraswati. Chaitanya Deva gave him the name Prabodhananda.”

Hari Das Das has also written in his Gauḍiya Vaiṣṇava Abhidhana: “Some people hold that Prabodhananda is the Vaishnava name given to Prakashananda... It is clear from the last verse of the Radha-rasa-sudha-nidhi that Prabodhananda had at one time been a mayavadi sannyasi.”

We would argue that the words mayavadarka-tapa-santapta which Hari Das Das quotes as proof of Prabodhananda’s former adherence to the impersonalist philosophy are not acceptable as proof. Mahaprabhu and all of his followers argued against the impersonalist doctrines as much as they could because of its extreme opposition to devotion. The Lord’s deliverance of Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya and Prakashananda Saraswati are greater feats of mercy than even

the salvation of Jagai and Madhai. This statement in the Rasa-sudha-nidhi is simply an effort to show the extent of Mahaprabhu's mercy and his quality as the deliverer of the most fallen.

### **Saraswati Thakur's introduction to Chaitanya-candrâmr̥ta**

In his introduction to the edition of Chaitanya-candramṛta, Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur, the founder of the worldwide Chaitanya Maths has written an account of Prabodhananda Saraswati's life. The rest of this chapter is a quotation in full of this account:

In 1510 AD, Sri Krishna Chaitanya went to Southern India in order to show his mercy to his devotees, though his ostensible purpose was to perform a pilgrimage. Starting from Puri in Orissa, he travelled southward to the Godavari and then continued through various other holy places. On the Ekadasi of the waxing fortnight of the month of Aṣāḥ, Mahaprabhu found himself in Sriraṅgam. The monks of the Dasanami order to which Mahaprabhu belonged normally follow the Caturmasya vows, and so the Lord decided to spend the four-month period in Sriraṅgam. This town is the residence of many Vaishnavas of the Sri-sampradaya. The Vaishnavas of this school are strongly fixed in their practice. Throughout southern India, Smarta Brahmins find it difficult to live in villages where the Sri Vaishnavas are strong. In that period, Sriraṅgam was a holy place exclusively inhabited by the Sri Vaishnavas. Mahaprabhu considered this a favorable environment for the execution of his four-month vow and so he spent the period in visiting the temple of Raṅganatha and preaching about Krishna.

Three brothers, Tirumalaya, Veṅkaṭa and Gopalguru had recently come from Mysore to live in Sriraṅgam. They were not Tamils but Andhras or from Uttarapradesa. The Lord was particularly merciful to this Brahmin family and spent the four months of the rainy season in their house. The middle brother, Veṅkaṭa, had a son of five years who later became Gopal Bhatta Goswami, one of the six Goswamis.

The Vaishnavas of the Sri-sampradaya are devoted to the worship of

Lakshmi Narayan. By Mahaprabhu's blessings, this Bhatta family developed a taste for Krishna rasa. Although we know nothing more about Tirumalaya, we can surmise that he was totally devoted to Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. The Lord's conversation with Venkṭaṭa Bhatta is described in the ninth chapter of the Chaitanya Charitamrita's Madhya-lila. Prabodhananda was unequalled in his attachment to Sri Chaitanya. Through his pure teachings, Venkṭaṭa's son Gopal Bhatta became a great acharya of the Gaudiya Vaishnava school. Prabodhananda himself has a particularly elevated position amongst the followers of Sri Chaitanya. Kavi Karṇapura has identified him as Tuṅgavidya in his Gaura-ṅoddesa-dipika. In the Hari-bhakti-vilasa, he is identified as Gopal Bhatta Goswami's guru and as extremely dear to Lord Chaitanya. In the Bhakti-ratnakara, the following passages about him are found:

Some people glorified Prabodhananda's virtues and thus he was given the title Saraswati by which he was known everywhere. Sri Krishna Chaitanya is the Supreme Lord and Supreme Absolute Truth. He was so dear to Prabodhananda that even in his dreams he knew nothing else. Prabodhananda was greatly renounced; he was affection incarnate and handsome, as well as being a great poet and expert in singing, playing musical instruments and dance. Everyone's joy increased on hearing him speak. These are some of the unlimited glories of Prabodhananda Saraswati. (Bhakti-ratnakara 1.149-153)

### **Prabodhananda comes to live in Vraja**

A few years after Mahaprabhu had returned to Puri, Prabodhananda entered into a deep understanding of the most intimate teachings given by Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. He left Sriraṅgam and went to live in Kamyavana in the Mathura region. Gopal Bhatta also gradually developed an intense desire to come and live in Vraja and so he followed the path taken by his uncle and guru.

Many people ask the question, "If Prabodhananda was so dear to Chaitanya, why is his name not mentioned anywhere in the Krishnadas Kaviraj Goswami's Chaitanya Charitamrita? Would he not have included the pastimes of such a great personality for the pleasure of the Vaishnavas?" We can find an adequate response to this question in the Bhakti-ratnakara. Narahari Chakravarti

writes:

Some people have described these activities of Gopal Bhatta, others have not. Those who cannot understand the reason for this engage in useless argument, with the result that an offensive attitude takes root in them. Previously, great rasika devotee poets who were quite capable of describing these events did not do so in order that others would be able to do so in the future. Gopal Bhatta enthusiastically gave his approval to the writing of [Chaitanya-caritamṛta] but would not allow [Krishnadas] to write anything about him. Who knows why he did this; likely it was his great humility. Krishnadas Kaviraj Goswami was not able to ignore his command. (Bhakti-ratnakara 1.209...223)

### **Prabodhananda and svakiya-rasa**

Some people say that Prabodhananda's writing show a tendency to the svakiya doctrine. For this reason, Gaudiya Vaishnavas who consider the parakiya-vada superior do not show a great enthusiasm for studying his books. Anyone who is devoted to Chaitanya Mahaprabhu is blessed. We simply follow Narahari Chakravarti, a neutral commentator, and avoid useless argument. We relish the writings of Prabodhananda which are filled with the sweetness of servitude to Krishna in the parakiya mood.

Prabodhananda's mood is very clear. In his language, both gravity and sweetness are found equally. Mahaprabhu's devotees take great pleasure in reading his Vrindavan-sataka. His Nabadwip-sataka resembles the Vrindavan-sataka. His Radha-rasa-sudha-nidhi is truly unequalled in the entire world. This book, Chaitanya-candramṛta, does not bring quite the same degree of pleasure from the poetic point of view, but is nevertheless extremely dear to the devotees who have an attachment to the sacred rapture of devotion. According to one's taste, one experiences a work as being superior or inferior. Thus for the transcendental moods of Vraja-bhakti to take effect on a reader, there is a certain dependence on his pious activities from previous lives. Another book, Viveka-sataka, attested by Aufrecht in his notices of manuscripts, is attributed to Prabodhananda Saraswati. The late Rama Das Sena of Berhampore saw this manuscript.

The Chaitanya-candramṛta was widely distributed in Bengal. Even those inimical to Chaitanya became purified upon reading it and experienced a change of heart. It thus goes without saying that devotees of Lord Chaitanya Mahāprabhu will be immersed in an ocean of indescribable ecstasy. When the Lord of Goloka comes and stays for four months in someone's house and accepts service from that household, it is not surprising that he bestows upon that household the most rare forms of love of God. The insignificant living entities can hope to gain some crumbs from the storehouse of priceless love which these blessed persons possess.

### **Prakashananda Saraswati**

Some people attempt to identify Prabodhananda with the Mayavadi sannyasi Prakashananda Saraswati who lived in Varāṇasi. We are not able to accept their arguments in any way whatsoever for the following reasons: The following account of Prakashananda Saraswati is given in the third chapter of the Madhyakhaṇḍa in the Chaitanya Bhagavat:

Thus the Lord constantly floated in the joys of devotion along with his followers in Nabadwip. One day, he heard a verse glorifying the Varaha avatar. He began to roar and went to Murari Gupta's house. Being satisfied by the praises of Murari, he began to speak in anger against the Vedas: "The Vedas say that I have no hands, feet, face or eyes. This is the way that they make a mockery of me. In Kashi there is a rascal named Prakashananda who teaches people, cutting my body up into little pieces. He states that the Veda does not accept that I have a body. His entire body has become infected with leprosy and yet he still does not accept my transcendental form. My body is pure and the condensed form of all the sacrifices. Brahma, Shiva and the other gods all glorify my form and activities. What audacity this rascal has to say that my body is false when one accumulates merit and becomes purified by coming into contact with it. (Chaitanya Bhagavat 2.3.35-40)

This event took place sometime between 1425 and 1430 of the Saka era (1504 and 1509 AD). Mahāprabhu came to Sriraṅgam in 1433 (1512 AD) which is the first time that he met Prabodhananda and his brothers. The three brothers were

Vaishnavas in the Sri sampradaya following Ramanuja and thus believers in the eternal form of Narayan. Prakashananda was a Mayavadi sannyasi during this time, a prominent follower of Saṅkara's doctrine. It is sheer madness to say that that these two persons are one and the same.

Again, in the Chaitanya Bhagavat, Madhya-khaṇḍa, the following mention is made of Prakashananda Saraswati:

As he spoke, the Lord was suddenly possessed by the spirit of the Divinity. Grinding his teeth, he angrily spoke the following words: The sannyasi Prakashananda is preaching in Kashi in a way that cuts my body into pieces. The rascal teaches Vedanta but does not accept my transcendental form. I have infected his body with leprosy, but still he does not understand. How can this rascal say that my body, which is filled with unlimited universes, is false? I tell you truthfully, Murari, for you are my servant, that anyone who denies my transcendental form is destined for destruction. My lila and my works are all true; my abode is true. Anyone who denies them will be struck down. The glories of the Lord will destroy one's ignorance if one hears them, but this sinful professor calls it all false. Anyone who has so little affection for my holy fame will never be able to understand my incarnation. (Chaitanya Bhagavat 2.10.31...44)

At that time, Prakashananda Saraswati was the leader of the ekadaṇḍi sannyasi followers of Saṅkara, whereas Prabodhananda was a tridaṇḍi sannyasi in the line of Ramanuja, who had moved to Sriraṅgam from Mysore. Prakashananda was a Mayavadi living in Kashi, whereas Prabodhananda was a Vaishnava living in Kamyavana. One was a northerner, the other a southerner. One was an impersonalist and monist, the other a devotee who first followed Ramanuja's viśiṣṭadvaita-vada and then converted to Mahaprabhu's acintya-bhedabheda-vada. One was an enemy of Vishnu and the Vaishnavas and only after conversion became a devotee, the other was the guru of Gopal Bhatta Goswami, an eternal associate of Lord Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and acharya of the Gaudiya Vaishnava sampradaya. Anyone who calls Gopal Bhatta Goswami's worshipable guru and uncle a mayavadi and enemy of Vishnu and the Vaishnavas, a conditioned soul, rather than an eternally perfect devotee of the highest order, is engaging in insults which are offensive and sure to lead him who makes them to a hellish destination.

In two places in the Chaitanya Charitamrita, an extensive description of the

conversion of Prakashananda Saraswati is given. It is impossible to understand how someone who had been a mayavadi from 1504 to 1509, then a qualified dualist Vaishnava in South India in 1512, should again become the leader of the Mayavadis in Kashi in 1514. Therefore, any attempt to identify Prakashananda with Prabodhananda is evidence of extreme ignorance. It is no small cause of distress to see the tradition being uprooted in this way. As proof of his humility, Prabodhananda asked through Gopal Bhatta that his own activities not be described in the Chaitanya-caritamṛta. Krishnadas Kaviraj Goswami was not able to disobey this order and so today we have this problem. If Prabodhananda had known that as a result of this silence people would later fall into confusion and identify him with someone who preached against Vishnu and the Vaishnavas he would surely not have commanded Gopal Bhatta and Krishnadas Kaviraj in this way. Anyone who reads the Bhakti-ratnakara will understand. The author of that book writes:

Gauracandra was the wealth of Tirumalaya, Venkṭa and Prabodhananda's lives. The three of them were worshipers of Lakshmi Narayan whose preferences changed to Radha and Krishna as a result of the Lord's mercy... The three of them wondered how they could continue living in the Lord's absence; they wondered who would joke with them and who would accompany them to the Kaveri to bathe in the morning... After four months, when the Lord left, the three brothers began to cry. Mahaprabhu embraced the three brothers and tried to console them. Some people glorified Prabodhananda's virtues and thus he was given the title Saraswati by which he was known everywhere. Sri Krishna Chaitanya is the Supreme Lord and Supreme Absolute Truth. He was so dear to Prabodhananda that even in his dreams he knew nothing else. (Bhakti-ratnakara 1.83-4, 128-9, 133, 135, 149, 150)

Professor Aufrecht has listed Saṅgita-Madhava as Prabodhananda's work. We managed to trace this work and published it in the 18th volume of Sajjana-toṣaṇi, in issues 5-12.

Sri Vaishnavas who renounce family life never take the single staff (ekadaṇḍa), which is the mark of the Saṅkarites. Their custom is to take the triple staff (tridaṇḍa) and the title Ramanujaryasvami. Some people claim upon reading the Chaitanya-candramṛta that Prabodhananda had been a worshiper of Brahman, but if we accept this without any supplementary evidence we fall into difficulty.

## Srila Raghunath Das Goswami

dasa-raghunathasya purvakhya rasa-manjari |  
amum̐ kecit prabhaṣante srimatim̐ rati-manjarim |  
bhanumaty-akhya kecit ahus taṁ nama-bhedataḥ ||

Raghnatha Das is ascribed three different names from his previous identity as a manjari in Krishna-lila: Rasa Manjari, Rati Manjari, and Bhanumati. (Gaura-gaṇoddesa-dipika 186)

### Raghunath's childhood

Raghunath Das was born in around 1416 Saka (1494 AD) in the town of Saptagram in Hooghly district. His actual birthplace was in the village of Krishnapura which is not far south of the current railway station name Adi Saptagram on the eastern bank of the ancient Saraswati River. Krishnapura is about a mile from Adi Saptagram station and approximately 1½ miles from Trish Bigha station.<sup>11813</sup> Saptagram was made up of seven villages: Saptagram, Vaṁsibaṭi, Shivapura, Vasudevapura, Nityanandapura and Saṅkhanagara. It was the main trade center on the Ganges in Bengal in the 15th and 16th centuries. The modern town of Triveni grew out of Saptagram.<sup>11813</sup>

Srila Raghunath Das Goswami was the son of Govardhana Majumdar. His mother's name is not known. Govardhana's older brother Hiranya had no male offspring. The two brothers belonged to the kayastha caste and were the primary landholders in Saptagram. In those days, the borders of Saptagram stretched from the Yasohara Bhairava creek almost up to the Rupa Narayan River.



Raghunath lived in Saptagram Krishnapura, his uncle Kali Das, who was also Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's devotee, lived in Saṅkhanagara. Raghunath's family priest, Balaram Acharya and his guru, Yadunandana Acharya, lived in the town of Chandpura. Yadunandana was a intimate disciple of Advaita Acharya and a dedicated devotee of Lord Chaitanya Mahaprabhu who had also received the special blessings of Vasudeva Datta Thakur.

After delivering the prostitute sent to tempt him by Ramachandra Khan, Hari Das Thakur left Benapole and came to Chandpura where he stayed with Balaram Acharya. Srila Raghunath Das Goswami was just a young boy at this time, but he had the opportunity to see Hari Das Thakur and receive his blessings. Krishnadas Kaviraj Goswami says that these blessings were the cause of Raghunath's later being able to attain the association of Mahaprabhu in the last years of his life.

Raghunath Das was just a little boy engaged in studies he had the darshan of Hari Das Thakur. Hari Das was merciful to him and this mercy was the reason that he later was able to attain the company of Lord Chaitanya. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.3.168-9)

### **Raghunath's desire to join the Lord**

Hiranya and Govardhana Majumdar had an annual income of 800,000 rupees. At that time, a rupee could buy about 650 lbs of rice, which means several hundred times the value of a rupee today. Even though Raghunath was the only heir to this great fortune, he was indifferent to riches from his childhood. He had his first opportunity to see Mahaprabhu when the Lord came to Shantipur after taking sannyas. As soon as he saw the Lord, Raghunath fell to his feet in a transport of divine love. Raghunath's father, Govardhana Majumdar, always served Advaita Acharya with faith and devotion, and thus Advaita Prabhu was predisposed to show kindness to the young Raghunath. He thus made sure that Raghunath received the Lord's remnants for as long as he remained in Shantipur.

When the Lord departed for Puri, Raghunath returned to his home in Saptagram, but he had been transformed and was constantly feeling intense

separation from the Lord. Seeing him in this condition, his father surrounded Raghunath by a guard of eleven men, including two Brahmins, four servants and five guards. Even so, Raghunath tried on several occasions to run away in order to join the Lord, but each time was caught and brought back before realizing his objectives. Raghunath became progressively depressed as a result of this situation.

In 1513, when the Lord made his attempt to visit Vrindavan, but only managed to get as far as Kanair Naṭasala, he returned to Shantipur and again stayed there for a short period of time. Raghunath wanted to see the Lord and this time begged his father to give him permission to go to Advaita's house. Govardhana was worried about the state of his son's mind and finally decided to let him go on condition that he return quickly. He also sent a large entourage of guards to accompany him.

When Raghunath saw the Lord, it was as though he regained a new lease on life. He told the Lord of the intolerable situation he was living and prayed to him to tell him how he could break free from the bondage of his material existence. The all-knowing Lord could understand the depth of Raghunath's feeling and yet he tried to pacify him with the following instruction:

“Calm yourself and return home. Don't be foolish. It takes time to cross the ocean of material suffering. Don't make a show of “monkey renunciation” (markaṭa-vairagya) simply for other people's benefit. Enjoy the worldly life in a moderate way without attachment. Be fixed on Krishna internally while externally dealing with the world in the appropriate fashion. It will not be long before Krishna delivers you.” (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.16.237-9)

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur has made the following comments on the word markaṭa-vairagya: “To a superficial eye, monkeys are engaged in renunciation because they live naked in the forest without any fixed home. In fact, they are only interested in their own sensual enjoyment and have never given it up. Such show-bottle renunciation is called markaṭa- vairagya, ‘monkey-renunciation’. Real renunciation comes as a side-effect of pure devotion, and other types of renunciation which arise out of frustration with material pleasures or desires cannot last throughout one's life. Because of its temporary character, such renunciation is therefore called phalgu, or false. Such temporary renunciation, or monkey renunciation, is also known as smasana-vairagya, ‘the renunciation of the cremation ground.’” 11914Srila Prabhupada A.

C. Bhaktivedanta Svami writes: “When a man takes a dead body to the crematorium, he sometimes thinks, "This is the final end of the body. Why am I working so hard day and night?" Such sentiments naturally arise in the mind of any man who goes to a crematorial ghaṭa. However, as soon as he returns from the cremation grounds, he again engages in material activity for sense enjoyment. This is called smasana-vairagya, or markaṭa-vairagya.”<sup>11914</sup>

“One may accept things which are absolutely necessary in order to serve Krishna without becoming absorbed by them or attached to them. If one lives in this way, he will not be under the influence of the karmic reactions resulting from the involvement with sense objects. In the Bhakti-rasamṛta-sindhu (1.2.108), it is said:

yavata syat sva-nirvahaḥ

svikuryat tavad arthavit |

adhikye nyunatayaṁ ca

cyavate paramarthataḥ ||

One who knows his purpose should accept only as much as he needs to maintain his existence. If he accepts more or less than that, he will fall from the supreme objective.

Sri Jiva Goswami glosses the word sva-nirvahaḥ in his Durgama- saṅgamaṇi commentary with the words sva-sva-bhakti-nirvahaḥ, i.e., a devotee should accept only those material things that will help him render service to the Lord, according to his own individual needs. In the Bhakti-rasamṛta-sindhu (1.2.256), markāṭa-vairagya, or phalgu-vairagya, has been more clearly explained as follows:

prapancikataya buddhya

hari-sambandhi-vastunaḥ |  
mumukṣubhiḥ parityago  
vairagyaṁ phalgu kathyate ||

Phalgu-vairagya is defined as the rejection by one desiring liberation of something which is related to the Lord in the understanding that it is something material.

[As I have written in Vaishnava ke?]: Sri hari-sevaya jâha anukula, viṣaya boliya tyage haya bhula-- “It is a mistake to renounce something which is favorable to the service of Lord Krishna, thinking it to be an ordinary material sense object.”

anasaktasya viṣayan  
yatharham upayunjataḥ |  
nirbandhaḥ kṛṣṇa-sambandhe  
yuktaṁ vairagyaṁ ucyate ||

Yukta-vairagya is defined as the attitude of one who is detached from the objects of the sense, but uses them only inasmuch as they have utility in the service of Lord Krishna.

[Once again, from Vaishnava ke?] asakti-rahita sambandha sahita viṣaya-samuha sakali madhava—”All sense objects which are used without personal attachment and in relation to Krishna are identical to Krishna.”

Taking Mahaprabhu’s instruction to heart, Raghunath returned home and gave up his feverish desire to renounce material life and instead engaged in his various duties with a sense of detachment. When his parents saw Raghunath abandon all the external signs of renunciation, they were delighted and they

began to think that there was no necessity for such a tight guard around their son.

### **Hiranya Majumdar's tax problems**

In those days, there was an officer of the Shah with the title caudhuri or nayeb who acted as an intermediary between the Shah and the zamindars. He collected taxes from the landowners and received a commission of 25% on them. Hiranya Majumdar, however, paid his taxes directly to the Shah, with whom he had a special agreement and thus cut out the middle man. Thus, on an income of 2,000,000 rupees, Hiranya was paying only 1,200,000 rather than 1,500,000, the difference which would normally have been paid to the caudhuri. Since he was losing a large amount of commission, the Turkish Muslim caudhuri became an enemy of the Majumdars.

Ever since returning from his meeting with Mahaprabhu, Raghunath was practicing yukta-vairagya in accordance with the Lord's instructions. However, when he heard that Mahaprabhu had returned from Vrindavan, he started making preparations to join him in Puri. At that time, the caudhuri had started making complaints to the Shah about Hiranya and Govardhana out of anger at being cheated of his percentage of the tax revenue. Fearful of arrest, the two brothers had gone into hiding.

When the minister came to investigate the caudhuri's complaints, he arrested Raghunath, since his father and uncle were not present. The caudhuri came daily to rebuke and threaten Raghunath, asking him to reveal their whereabouts. Finally he decided to have Raghunath beaten, but when he saw his calm, lotus-like face, he was unable to continue. In fact, though he verbally chastized him, the caudhuri was afraid to cause him any real harm because Raghunath belonged to an influential family of the kayastha class. He knew that the kayasthas are intelligent and could plot against him, causing him worse problems.

Raghunath himself was looking for a way to extricate himself from the situation, and spoke to the caudhuri in a sweet voice: "My father and uncle are like your brothers. The behavior of brothers is difficult to understand--sometimes

they fight amongst themselves, sometimes they are loving to each other. Today you are arguing, but tomorrow, I am sure that you will be reconciled with each other. I am your son as much as I am my father's and therefore you are my protector. It is not right for one such as yourself to punish his dependent. I need say no more, for you know the scriptures and are practically a living saint, a pir."

The caudhuri was affected by Raghunath's sweet words and began to cry as he was overcome by affection for him. He said, "From now on, I consider you to be my son. I will find an excuse to have you freed today. Have your uncle meet with me and make arrangements so that I can get my share of the revenues."

Thus Raghunath was able to mollify the caudhuri by his sweet and diplomatic behavior and bring the dispute between him and his uncle to an end. In the meantime, Raghunath's father was making arrangements for his son's marriage to an extremely beautiful girl in order to insure his commitment to the family.

## **The Daṇḍa-mahotsava**

A year later, Raghunath once again became anxious to see Mahaprabhu and repeatedly ran away from home in an effort to go to Puri. Each time, he was caught by his father and returned home. Raghunath's mother thought that her son was going mad and told her husband to place him under guard again. Govardhana responded in defeated tones,

"He has as much wealth as Indra, the king of the gods, and his wife is as beautiful as the heavenly courtesans. If these things have not been able to capture his spirit, then how will mere ropes be able to do so? The father who gives life to a child cannot interfere with the effects of his previous lives' actions. Sri Chaitanya Candra has given his blessings to this boy. Who can keep prisoner one who was been made mad by Lord Chaitanya Mahaprabhu?" (Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.6.39-41)

While Raghunath Das was devising a plan for how he would be delivered from his entanglements, he heard that Nityananda Prabhu had made an auspicious

appearance in the town of Panihati. Thinking that Nityananda was the deliverer of the most fallen and that by his mercy he would surely be able to find his freedom, he went across the Ganges to Panihati where he found the Lord sitting under a tree on a wooden seat, surrounded by his associates. As soon as Raghunath saw him from a distance, he fell down like a rod. The merciful Lord Nityananda immediately had him brought close to him and, understanding the deep-rooted desires of Raghunath's heart, arranged for him to perform a service to the Vaishnavas so that he could realize them.

“Like a thief, you don't come near me, but simply try to run away. Now that I have caught you, I shall punish you. I want you to feed all my followers chipped rice and yogurt.” When he heard Nityananda's command, Raghunath's mind was filled with joy. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.6.50-1)

The festival which Nityananda ordered Raghunath to put on is still celebrated as the Panihati Cīṛadadhi Mahotsava. Nityananda Prabhu and a manifestation of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu himself celebrated the festival, eating on the banks of the Ganges just as though they were cowherd boys on the banks of the Yamuna River. Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, Nityananda Prabhu, their associates, numerous Brahmins and countless men and women from the area enjoyed a feast of milk and chipped rice and yogurt and chipped rice. The opportunity to serve the Lord and his devotees in this way was something that could not come about except for some great fortune.

On the following day, Raghunath Das Goswami emotionally asked Nityananda through Raghava Pandit how he could possibly gain freedom from his material entanglements and find the association of Mahaprabhu. Like an ocean of mercy, Nityananda Prabhu placed his feet on Raghunath's head and said,

“You arranged this feast on the banks of the river and Mahaprabhu was merciful to you and came here himself to enjoy it. He blessed you by accepting the offering of chipped rice and yogurt. Then, after watching the devotees' dancing, he took prasada in the evening. Lord Gauranga came here just to deliver you and now he has removed any impediments which remained. He will turn you over to Svarupa Damodar and making you his confidential servant, he will keep you by his side. Go home now and forget your worries. You will soon be able to go to

the Lord without any difficulties.” (Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.6.139-143)

After discussing with Raghava Pandit, Raghunath gave a large sum of money as dakṣiṇa to be paid to Nityananda and his associates. He himself felt as though his life had been fulfilled after receiving Nityananda Prabhu’s blessings. Upon returning to his house, he never again entered the inner quarters, but remained outside where he slept in the Durga Maṇḍapa. Nevertheless, there was always a guard posted near him to prevent him running away.

### **Raghunath escapes**

Though Raghunath knew that the devotees from Bengal were preparing their annual trip to Puri, he was afraid of joining them because he knew that he would easily be caught. One day, about an hour before dawn, Yadunandana Acharya came by the house while Raghunath was sleeping on the Durga-maṇḍapa. He told Raghunath that a disciple who performed the puja had abandoned his service and needed to be persuaded to take it up again as there was no replacement.

Raghunath accompanied his guru while all the guards were still sleeping. After walking a way with Yadunandana Acharya, however, Raghunath told him to return to his home, saying that he would go alone to the disciple’s house and convince him to come and perform his duties. He told him not to worry and bid him goodbye. With no guards or servants around him, Raghunath realized that he had a golden opportunity to make his escape.

Meditating on Mahaprabhu’s lotus feet, he started to walk toward the east. He avoided the main roads for fear of being caught and even the smaller roads through the villages. Despite the difficult route through the jungle, he walked thirty miles on the very first day, finally taking rest in a milkman’s cowshed that evening. The milkman saw that he had not eaten for the entire day and gave him some milk.

When Govardhana heard that his son had run away, he immediately sent a group of ten servants with a letter for Shivananda Sena who was already on his



way to Puri with the devotees, telling him to send Raghunath back. They caught up with the group of pilgrims at a place called Jhaṅkara, but were disappointed to find that Raghunath was not with them. Meanwhile, Raghunath was walking at great speed towards Puri, completely oblivious to his own fatigue and hunger.

Raghunath arrived in Puri after only twelve days, having stopped to eat only three times along the way and resting only infrequently. He came upon Mahaprabhu, who was sitting with Svarupa Damodar, and paid his obeisances to the Lord from a certain distance. Mukunda Datta informed the Lord that Raghunath had arrived and was paying his obeisances. The Lord told him to approach and Raghunath fell at his feet. The Lord embraced him, his heart melting with compassion for the exhausted young man. He said, “Nothing is more powerful than Krishna’s mercy. It has dragged you out of the deep latrine hole of sense gratification.” (Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.6.193) Raghunath answered the Lord mentally, thinking, “I know nothing about Krishna. I believe that it was you who pulled me out of that hole.”

Mahaprabhu’s maternal grandfather, Nilambara Chakravarti knew Raghunath’s father and uncle and used to call them bhaya because they were younger than he. They too called him dada (“older brother”) because he was their elder and a Brahmin. Knowing that this relationship existed between them, Mahaprabhu joked with Raghunath, saying:

“Your father and uncle are like worms in the latrine pit of sense gratification. They think that the suffering which comes from sense gratification is happiness. Even though they believe in brahminical culture and contribute to it, they are not pure Vaishnavas, only imitation Vaishnavas. The nature of the sense objects is that they make one blind; they make one engage in activities which result in material bondage. It is not possible to properly describe Krishna’s mercy which has delivered you from such bondage.” (Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.6.197-200)

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur has written the following about Krishna’s mercy and the suffering caused by the poison of sense gratification: “Krishna’s mercy is more powerful than the results of one’s previous activities. It was this powerful compassion of the Lord which pulled Raghunath out of the latrine hole of sensual existence. A living entity who is attached to sense gratification does not have the strength to give it up. For the

living being who has become a pure devotee of Krishna, however, sense enjoyments are like a ditch of stool. Mahaprabhu knew that Raghunath was completely free from any attachment to sense gratification. Nevertheless, he said this to him as a teaching to the conditioned souls.” (Anubhaṣya 6.9.193)

“Sense objects (viṣaya) bring great distress to their so-called enjoyer (viṣayi). Even so, those whose brains are completely immersed in the objects of sense gratification and are entangled in the whirlpool of material existence consider these sources of distress to be happiness. The objects of material sense gratification should be discarded in the same way that one abandons an outhouse, and one whose mind is possessed by the desire for these objects of gratification is like a maggot who feeds off the stools in the latrine. This is how the transcendentalist sees the materialistic person who is trying to extract pleasure from inert matter. He has nothing but disdain for materialistic pleasures which he sees being exactly like the pleasure a maggot extracts from the taste of rotting excrement.” (Anubhaṣya 6.9.197)

### **Raghunath’s renunciation**

Mahaprabhu noticed that Raghunath was dirty and weak after his journey and so, after accepting him as his own son and servant, entrusted him to Svarupa Damodar, telling him take responsibility for him and to see to his well-being. He was thenceforth to be known as Svarupa’s Raghunath to distinguish him from Raghunath Vaidya and Raghunath Bhatta, who were also living in Mahaprabhu’s association in Puri at that time. The Lord also told Govinda to take care of Raghunath with great affection. He then told him to go and take his bath in the ocean and go to see Lord Jagannath, after which he was to join him for lunch. When Govinda gave Raghunath the remnants of the Lord’s plate to eat, Raghunath was overjoyed.

Things went on like this for five days, Raghunath taking the Lord’s remnants each day, but on the sixth day, he stopped taking the Lord’s mahaprasada. From that day on, he went to the Jagannath temple and took darshan of the Lord’s flower offering, after which he would stand at the Lion’s Gate and beg maha prasada. At night, after they had finished their duties,

Jagannath's servants would pass by on their way home and would customarily give prasad to any hungry Vaishnavas who waited there. In this way, renounced Vaishnavas could keep body and soul together. This type of renounced attitude was particularly noticeable amongst Mahaprabhu's devotees.

When the Lord asked after Raghunath and learned that he was no longer taking prasad in the same way as before, but begging by the Simha-dvara, he was satisfied to see that he was taking the renounced way of life so seriously. He said,

“That's very good. He is taking the life of a renunciate seriously. A renunciate should always be engaged in repeating the names of the Lord and should keep his body and soul together through begging. Anyone who takes the renounced order and then becomes dependent on others cannot achieve his ends and Krishna will ignore him. One who becomes a renunciate and then lusts for tasty foods will never attain his spiritual goal, and will simply become the slave of his tastebuds. A vairagi's duty is to always chant the names of Lord Krishna and fill his belly with spinach leaves, fruits and roots. One who runs here and there looking for good things to eat becomes attached to his sex organs and his belly and will never attain Krishna.” (Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.6.222-7)

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur has underscored Krishnadas Kaviraj Goswami's statement that the vairagi's only duty is to chant the names of the Lord. He has written the following: “Examining them impartially, both materialistic non-devotees and pure Vaishnavas can see that Mahaprabhu's associates are not attached to the gratification of their material senses. They are indifferent to anything which cannot be used in the service of Krishna. The reasons for such renunciation are incomprehensible to the ordinary materialistic person, for their service is without any external motive and it cannot be interrupted by any mundane impediment. When Lord Gaurasundara sees a devotee engaged in this kind of devotional service, completely indifferent to sense objects which are outside the scope of his service needs, he is greatly pleased with his clever attitude.

“The various rituals which are described in the Hari-bhakti-vilasa are meant for the wealthy householder and not for the vairagi who has renounced everything to take exclusive shelter of the Holy Name. One who chants the holy names in the morning, in the middle of the night, in the midday and at sunset, in other words throughout the day and night is certain to cross over the ocean of

material existence. Those pure devotees who are fixed exclusively on the devotional service of the Lord and chant his names and remember him with love have no duty to perform other than kirtan and smaraṇa.” (Anubhāṣya 3.6.223, translation of Hbv 20.366, 379, 382).

Srila Raghunath Das Goswami would never speak to the Lord directly, but asked Govinda or Svarupa Damodar to submit any question or request to the Lord on his behalf. One day he asked the Lord through Svarupa Damodar to instruct him personally on his duties. When the Lord heard this, he told Raghunath that Svarupa Damodar knew far more than he did and that he should take instruction from him about the goal of life and how to attain it. When Raghunath’s eagerness to hear from him directly did not abate, the Lord said, “If he has faith in my words, then let him follow these instructions:

“Do not listen to gossip nor engage in gossip yourself. You should not eat very palatable food, nor should you dress very nicely. Always chant the holy name of Lord Krishna without any expectation of honor, offering all respect to others. Mentally render service to Radha and Krishna in Vrindavan.” (Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.6.236-7)

The Bengali devotees arrived in Puri for Rathayatra and met Raghunath, who was particularly fortunate to receive Advaita Prabhu’s blessings. Shivananda Sena told him that his father had been looking for him. After staying four months in Puri, the devotees returned to Bengal and Shivananda gave news of Raghunath to Govardhana Majumdar, telling him of his determined ascetic spiritual practices. Raghunath’s parents were distressed to hear of his lifestyle and sent a Brahmin, two servants and four hundred rupees to Shivananda for Raghunath. The following year, Shivananda took these servants and the money to Puri with him and informed Raghunath that his father had sent them. Raghunath would not accept them, but thinking of his father’s benefit, he took some of the money and used it to pay for Mahaprabhu’s meals twice a month. After doing this for two years, Raghunath abandoned this practice also. In response to Mahaprabhu’s question about why Raghunath had stopped inviting him, Svarupa Damodar said that Raghunath had decided that since his father was a materialistic man, Mahaprabhu was not really pleased to eat the food purchased with his money. By accepting such money his own mind was becoming contaminated and his only gain was some fame and status. Furthermore, he thought that Mahaprabhu was only accepting his invitations out of kindness because Raghunath was so foolish that he would be unhappy if he

refused, but that in fact he was secretly not very pleased by it. Mahaprabhu was greatly satisfied to hear this conclusion and said,

“When one eats food offered by a materialistic person, one’s mind becomes contaminated. If the mind is contaminated, one is unable to remember Krishna. The food of a materialistic person is infected by the mode of passion and both the person who offers it and the one who accepts it are mentally contaminated. I accepted Raghunath’s invitation for many days because of his enthusiasm. I am glad that he has realized all this and given up this practice on his own initiative.” (Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.6.278-80)

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur has commented on the above events as follows: “People who are egotistical and possessive are generally materialistic persons who try to enjoy the world for their own sense gratification. Such persons see their money as a tool for achieving such sense gratification. If they attempt to serve the Lord, the guru or the Vaishnavas, who are beyond the material energy, their only gain will be an increase in material prestige and not the true benefits of such service. One who seeks true auspiciousness should therefore try to serve the Supreme Personality of Godhead by full surrender to his lotus feet and then engaging whatever money one has honestly earned in the spiritual service of Krishna, the spiritual master and the Vaishnavas, using his body, mind, words and heart.” (Anubhāṣya 3.6.275)

“Certain materialistic persons who are intoxicated by high birth, riches, learning or physical beauty, may make a show of deity worship, offer the prasada from that worship to Vaishnavas. Due to their ignorance, they are not aware that because they lack devotion, the Lord does not accept their offerings. Because of the taint of the sense enjoyer’s false pride which contaminates such offerings, it is often seen that the pure Vaishnava is indifferent to such apparent service to the deity. In other words, a pure Vaishnava who has renounced the life of sense enjoyment does not accept such service. Rich materialistic sense gratifiers are so foolish because of their sense of identification with the body and mind that they become angry with the Vaishnavas and offended by their behavior. (Anubhāṣya 3.6.276)

“Non-devotees and Prakṛta-sahajiyas are considered to be materialistic, or viṣayis. Because they offer food without devotion, an aspiring devotee will be contaminated by their association through eating their food. The result of such flaws in association (saṅga-doṣa), one will develop the same mentality as they. If

one engages in even minimal association with materialists or Sahajiyas, who are materialists in the guise of Vaishnavas, through any of the six kinds of association (exchanging gifts, food or confidences), with even a drop of hidden affection, the result will be that the transcendental devotional service of Lord Krishna is transformed into sense gratification, and this will cause the aspiring devotee's falldown. The conclusion is that one whose mind is fixed on the pleasures of the bodily senses and contaminated by the sense objects is too impure to be able to serve Krishna through the process of transcendental remembrance or *smaraṇa*." (Anubhāṣya 3.6.278)

Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur has also written about the rajasika character of a materialistic person's dinner invitations. He says, "Invitations to dinner are of three kinds, *sattvika*, *rajasika* and *tamasika*. The invitation of a pure devotee is in the mode of goodness, that of a pious materialistic person is in the mode of passion, while the invitation of a very sinful person is in the mode of darkness." (Amṛta-pravaha-bhāṣya, 3.6.279)

Raghunath Goswami's asceticism grew stronger with each passing day. He stopped begging at the Lion's Gate and started going instead to an almshouse. When Mahaprabhu heard this news from Govinda, he asked Svarupa Damodar what the cause was for the change. Svarupa Damodar answered that Raghunath was finding that a lot of time was being wasted standing in front of the *Simha-dvara* and was going to the almshouse every day at noon instead. Mahaprabhu praised Raghunath's decision, saying, "Begging by the *Simha-dvara* resembles the behavior of a prostitute." A prostitute stands around and waits for some man to come and give her some business, a beggar cannot remain indifferent as he waits for someone to be kind to him. Going for handouts at the almshouse does not present the same kind of problem. One simply has to go at the proper time and one receives enough to keep his body alive. This is useful if one wishes to use one's time in chanting the Holy Names.

The sannyasi Saṅkarananda Saraswati sent Mahaprabhu a *gunja-mala* and a *Govardhana-sila* from Vrindavan. Mahaprabhu cherished the two objects, taking the necklace of *gunja* beads to be identical to Radharani and the stone from *Govardhana* to be identical to Krishna. Mahaprabhu would hold the *Govardhana-sila* to his head, to his eyes and to his heart, and this would bring him great pleasure. After worshiping the necklace and the stone for three years, he decided one day to give them to Raghunath as a sign of his satisfaction with his devotion. Raghunath felt honored and delighted by the Lord's gift, and taking

them to be the direct representations of Sri-Sri-Gandharvika-Giridhari, he worshiped them with water and tulasi leaves. When engaged in such loving service, he would go into a devotional trance. After his disappearance, the Govardhana-sila was placed in the Gokulananda temple where it is still being served.

It is said of Raghunath Das Goswami's ascetic vows that they were like lines drawn in stone. He spent 21½ hours a day engaged in chanting Krishna's names and in smaraṇa, only one and a half hours for sleep and food. He only ate enough to keep body and soul together. He allowed no delicious foods to ever touch his tongue, and he wore only a piece of torn cloth and a quilt.

Finally, he started going at night to gather the prasāda which the vendors outside the temple threw away near the Simha-dvara after it started to go so bad that even the Tailaṅgi cows would not eat it. He would wash it to take out the dirt with which it had become mixed until he reached the hard core of the grains which had not cooked. This is what he would eat, only adding a little salt. One day, Sri Svarupa Damodar Goswami saw Raghunath doing this and came and asked him for some of this prasāda, comparing it to the nectar of the gods. Even Mahāprabhu, when he heard about it from Govinda, came and took a handful of Raghunath's prasāda, though Svarupa Damodar prevented him from taking a second.

“What is this all about? You are eating such nice things and not giving any to me?” Saying this, the Lord snatched a morsel from Raghunath and ate it. As he was about to take another Svarupa Damodar caught Him by the hand and said, “It is not fit for you,” and took it away from him. (3.6.322-3)

Srila Raghunath Das Goswami has himself summarized these experiences in his verses called Chaitanya-stava-kalpa-vṛkṣa (“The desire tree of Chaitanya Mahāprabhu's glories”) which can be found in the collection called Stavavali.

maha-sampad-davad api patitam uddhṛtya kṛpaya

svarupe yaḥ sviye kujanam api maṁ nyasya muditaḥ |

uro-gunja-haraṁ priyam api ca govardhana-silaṁ

dadau me gaurāṅgo hṛdaya udayan maṁ madayati ||

By his mercy, Sri Gaurāṅga took pleasure in delivering me  
even though I am a fallen soul, the lowest of men,  
from the blazing forest fire of great material opulence  
and entrusted me to his personal associate, Svarūpa Damodar.

He gave me the cherished guṇja garland that he wore on his chest as well as his  
Govardhana sila.

And now he awakens within my heart  
and makes me mad after him. (verse 11)

### **Rāghunātha goes to Vrindavan**

Rāghunātha remained under Svarūpa Damodar's tutelage as long as he stayed in  
Puri, thus gaining direct access to Mahāprabhu's confidential service and  
association. In all, he remained there for sixteen years until the Lord and his  
chief confidant disappeared to the eyes of this world.

When this event took place, Rāghunātha felt that he could no longer live in  
their absence and decided to go to Vrindavan to commit suicide by jumping from  
Govardhana Hill. When he arrived in Vraja, he met Rupa and Sanātana  
Goswamis. They spoke to him for a long time and finally persuaded him not to  
put an end to his life. They adopted him as their third brother and kept him with  
them. Rupa and Sanātana were enriched by hearing the nectarean pastimes of  
Lord Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu from Rāghunātha.

Rāghunātha Das Goswami's separation from Mahāprabhu and Rādhā-  
Kṛṣṇa became so intense that he gave up eating solid food altogether, only



drinking whey to sustain himself. He would pay a thousand prostrated obeisances, chant 100,000 Holy Names, serve Radha and Krishna mentally both day and night, recount the glorious pastimes of Lord Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and bathe three times a day without fail in Radha Kuṇḍ. This was the exemplary standard of bhajana set by Raghunath in which he served their Lordships for more than 22 hours a day, sleeping only an hour and a half, if at all.

Raghunath's renunciation may superficially be compared to that of the Buddha, but when examined more closely it will be observed that there are some unique characteristics in Raghunath's asceticism. The external meaning of renunciation is detachment from sense gratification, but its true meaning is attachment to the supreme person. Raghunath's strong attachment to the lotus feet of Radha and Krishna meant that he was completely and naturally detached from anything which was not connected to his worshipable lords.

## **Radha Kund**

Sri Raghunath Das Goswami lived a long life. Srinivas Acharya had the chance to receive Raghunath's blessings before leaving Vrindavan to return to the East with the Goswamis' books. Srinivas was astounded by the powerful asceticism and deep absorption in love. Raghunath Das Goswami wrote three books: Stavavali, Sri Dana-carita (Dana-keli-cintamani) and Mukta-carita.

He lived in Radha Kund which was where he engaged in his most intense devotional practices. He was blessed there by Nityananda Prabhu's widow, Jahnava Devi, when she visited Radha Kund.

When Mahaprabhu himself visited the village of Ariṭ and displayed his pastime of bathing in a rice field, by which he indicated the presence of Radha Kund and Syama Kund. At that time the two tanks had not been excavated and finished with steps, etc. Raghunath himself thought it would be a good idea to have this work done, but had some reservations about getting involved in this kind of work. However, one day, a rich merchant who was on pilgrimage to Badari Narayan with the intention of donating a large sum of money to the temple there. But Badari Narayan appeared to him in a dream and told him to

fund Raghunath's vision of a developed Radha Kund and Syama Kund. The merchant came back to Vraja and found Raghunath in the village of Ariṭ and recounted the story of the dream to him. Raghunath thus supervised the excavation of the ponds and the subsequent building of stone steps walkways.

Five trees stood on the banks of Syama Kund which are said to be the five Paṇḍavas. Raghunath had the intention of cutting down these trees so that Syama Kund could be made perfectly rectangular. Before this could happen, however, Raghunath had a dream in which Yudhiṣṭhira appeared to him and told him that the five Paṇḍavas were present in Radha Kund in the form of these trees. Raghunath immediately stopped the workers from cutting them down. This is why Syama Kuṇḍ was not built as a perfect rectangle.

### **Other legends about Raghunath in Vraja**

Another story is told about Raghunath Das Goswami. It is said that when he read Rupa Goswami's play, Lalita Madhava, he was submerged in an ocean of separation. Though he he was permanently in Radha's association at Radha Kuṇḍ, he was unable to tolerate even a momentary threat of separation, what to speak of intense feelings of Krishna's absence. When he read the Lalita-madhava, which has separation from Krishna as its primary subject matter, this mood became so strong that it became doubtful that he would be able to survive. When Rupa saw Raghunath's response to his play, he wrote another, short work named Dana-keli-kaumudi which is full of humor and amusing banter. He gave this book to Raghunath and took back his copy of Lalita-Madhava. When Raghunath read Dana-keli-kaumudi, he forgot his feelings of separation.

At first, when staying by Radha Kund Raghunath had no fixed shelter. He occasionally stayed with Gopal Bhatta Goswami, whose cottage was situated on the banks of the Manasa-Ganga in Govardhana. One day he took bath in the Manasa-Ganga and then went to sit under a tree surrounded by unkept thickets and began to worship the Lord in a devotional trance. While he was meditating, a tiger came there to drink water. Sanatan Goswami was also present there at the time and observed Raghunath as he remained unmoved even though exposed to such danger. He instructed Raghunath to build a cottage in which to live and

engage in his devotional activities.

Srila Raghunath Das Goswami had special affection for a certain Vrajavasi whose name was Das. Raghunath's daily nourishment consisted of only a leaf bowl of whey. This Vrajavasi was distressed to learn that Raghunath ate so little, thinking that it was impossible for him to keep alive on such a small amount. One day when in the village known as Sakhisthali, he was overjoyed to see a silk cotton tree with huge leaves. He had a bigger sized bowl made with these leaves in which he put whey for Raghunath and then brought it to him. Raghunath was quite astonished to see such a large leaf-bowl and asked him where he got it. When he heard the name of Sakhisthali, he immediately threw down the bowl and the whey. Sakhisthali is the home of Candravali, Radharani's primary rival for Krishna's love. Candravali's sakhis like Saivya and Padma are constantly looking for ways to take Krishna away from Radha's bower and bring him to that of their girlfriend. Just as Radharani is distressed by these actions, so are her girlfriends. Raghunath was a member of Radharani's entourage and so it was his role to constantly think of how to bring happiness to her and her girlfriends. As soon as he heard the name of Sakhisthali mentioned, he was transported by anger. This mood is the ultimate stage of love which envious people who are burdened by material lust could never understand. In the Bhakti-ratnakara, it is written,

After calming down, Raghunath said to Das, "That is Candravali's place. You shouldn't ever go there." Das Vrajavasi calmed down and recognized that these were the symptoms of spiritual perfection in what was apparently a spiritual aspirant. All these devotees are eternally perfected souls. Anyone who doubts it must be considered fallen. (Bhakti-ratnakara 5.572-4)

There is one other extraordinary legend about Raghunath Das Goswami recounted in the Bhakti-ratnakara. One day he was suffering from indigestion. Viṭṭhalanatha came with two doctors from Vallabhapura to cure Raghunath Das. After examining him, the doctors said that the indigestion had been caused by eating rice and milk. Viṭṭhalanatha was astonished to hear this diagnosis and said, "This is impossible. This man never eats anything but whey." Raghunath then spoke up, saying that he had indeed eaten milk and rice in the course of his meditation on the pastimes of Radha and Krishna.

Sri Raghunath Das Goswami left his body on the banks of Radha Kund where his samadhi tomb stands. This took place on the Sukla Dvadasi tithi of the

month of Asvina, in the year 1586.

## **Srila Jiva Goswami**

According to the *Gaura-gaṇoddesa-dipika* (195), Srila Jiva Goswami was Vilasa Manjari in his previous incarnation in Vraja. In verse 203 of the same book, it is stated that he was the son of Vallabha and a scholar of exemplary character (*susilaḥ paṇḍitaḥ sriman jivaḥ sri-vallabhatmajah*). According to the *Gauḍiya Vaiṣṇava Abhidhana*, Jiva was present in this world from 1433 to 1518 of the Saka era (1511-1596). Other sources propose that Jiva's dates are from 1533 to 1618.

### **Jiva's early life**

Srila Jiva Goswami appeared in the village of Ramakeli in the district of Maldah as the son of Anupama Mallik (Vallabha) who had made his residence there in order to serve in the government. The name of Jiva's mother is not known. Narahari Chakravarti has given Jiva's genealogy going back seven generations. This list, as explained by Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur has been given here in this volume in the chapter on Srila Rupa Goswami (page 14). Jiva Goswami's father's original name was Vallabha, but Mahaprabhu gave him the name Anupama.

When Mahaprabhu came to Ramakeli, he met Anupama for the first time. By his desire, a spirit of renunciation took root in Rupa and Sanatan upon meeting the Lord on that occasion. This led to their abandonment of their worldly duties and possessions not long thereafter and they set off in an effort to be reunited with Mahaprabhu in Vrindavan. The same spirit of renunciation took hold in Jiva Goswami's heart at this time also, as has been vividly described by Narahari in *Bhakti-ratnakara* as follows:

Jiva's mind became distracted from the time that his two uncles went to Vrindavan. He abandoned his jewels and fine dress, his comfortable bed and his various amusements. It was as though nothing interested him any more. He could not bear hearing news of political and other material affairs. (Bhakti-ratnakara 1.686-8)

Narahari summarizes Jiva's early life story as follows: In a dream, Jiva had a vision of Mahaprabhu dancing in the midst of sankirtan. He was overwhelmed by feelings of divine love and soon thereafter left his home in Bakla Candradvipa. He had some companions who went with him as far as Fateyabad, but from there he continued alone to Nabadwip. There he met Nityananda Prabhu in the home of Srivasa Pandit and received his blessings. Nityananda Prabhu told him at that time that he should go to Vrindavan:

With fatherly affection, Nityananda touched Jiva's head with his feet. He showed incomparable mercy toward Jiva, lifting him from the ground and embracing him tightly. Transported by divine ecstasy, Nityananda Prabhu said, "I rushed here from Khardaha for your sake alone." He said other things like this to pacify Jiva and then made Srivasa Pandit and the other devotees give their blessings to Jiva. After keeping Jiva there for some time with him, Nityananda Prabhu sent him off to the West... He said, "Hurry off now to Vraja. That is the place the Lord has given over to your family." (Bhakti-ratnakara 1.765-9, 772)

It is not clear whether Jiva ever met Mahaprabhu directly even though there is a hint in the Bhakti-ratnakara that Jiva was a baby when the Lord came to Ramakeli. Thus, Jiva demonstrated an interest in devotion to the Supreme Lord from his early childhood. Even when playing with his friends, he was only interested in games that were connected to the worship of Krishna.

When Jiva was a little boy, he refused to play any game with the other boys that had no relation to Krishna. He made images of Krishna and Balaram and would worship them with flowers and sandalwood paste and dress and decorate them. He would gaze upon them with unblinking eyes, looking for all the world like a golden doll himself, sitting motionless on the floor. When he paid obeisance to the deities, his eyes filled with tears. He would offer their Lordships sweets and then take the prasada and distribute it to his friends. (Bhakti-ratnakara 1.719-23)

## **Jiva goes to Vraja**

By Nityananda's grace, Jiva was able to visit all the sacred sites in Nabadwip Dhama. After completing the tour of the dham, he travelled to Benares where he studied all the scriptures with Madhusudana Vacaspati. Then he went on to Vrindavan where he remained under the tutelage of Rupa and Sanatan Goswamis.

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur has written the following about Srila Jiva Goswami in his Anubhaṣya to the Chaitanya Charitamrita: "After the disappearance of Rupa and Sanatan, Jiva was established as the topmost teacher of doctrine in the sampradaya. He engaged everyone in the worship of Krishna through teaching the truths given by Mahaprabhu himself. On occasion, he would sometimes do the Vraja Dham parikrama with the other devotees and sometimes would go to visit Viṭṭhaladeva in Mathura. Krishnadas Kaviraj Goswami wrote the Chaitanya Charitamrita while Jiva was still alive. Not long thereafter, when Srinivas, Narottama and Dukhi Krishna Das came from Bengal, he taught them and gave them the titles Acharya, Thakur and Shyamananda. He then sent them back to Bengal with all the scriptures that had been written by the Goswamis, with instructions to preach the religion of the Holy Names and love of Krishna. He received the news of the loss of the scriptures and later of their retrieval. He gave the title Kaviraj to both Ramachandra Sena and his brother Govinda. During his lifetime, Jahnavi Devi and other devotees came to Vrindavan. When Bengali devotees came to Vraja, he arranged for their victuals and lodgings during their stay." (Anubhaṣya 1.10.85)

The loss of the scriptures referred to in the above paragraph took place when agents of the king Vira Hambira of Vana Vishnupura stole them. Later, when the king heard Srinivas Acharya speak on the Bhagavat, he was converted to Vaiṣṇavism and took initiation from him. The books were thus recovered by Srinivas. All this is described in full in this volume in chapter 17 on Srinivas Acharya.

## **Jiva's writings and controversies**

In the Bhakti-ratnakara, a list has been given of twenty-five works ascribed to Jiva:

- (1) Harinamamṛta-vyakaraṇa
- (2) Sutramalika
- (3) Dhatusaṅgraha
- (4) Kṛṣṇarcana-dipika
- (5) Gopal-virudavali
- (6) Rasamṛta-seṣa
- (7) Madhava-mahotsava
- (8) Saṅkalpa-kalpa-vṛkṣa
- (9) Bhavartha-sucaka-campu
- (10) Gopal-tapani-ṭika
- (11) Brahma-saṁhita-ṭika
- (12) Rasamṛta-ṭika
- (13) Ujjvala-ṭika
- (14) Yogasara-stavaka ṭika
- (15) Agnipuraṇa-stha-Gayatri-bhaṣya
- (16) Padma-puraṇokta Krishna-pada-padma-cihna
- (17) Sri Radhika-kara-pada-sthita-cihna

(18) Gopal-campu, Purva and Uttara divisions

(19) Krama-sandarbha

(20) Tattva-sandarbha

(21) Bhagavat-sandarbha

(22) Paramatma-sandarbha

(23) Krishna-sandarbha

(24) Bhakti-sandarbha

(25) Priti-sandarbha

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur has given the following warning in his Anubhaṣya to those inexperienced persons who might be deprived of Krishna-prema through the influence of ignorant and offensive sahajiyā teachings: “Three slanderous ideas about Jiva Goswami are current amongst the ignorant Prakṛta Sahajiyas. Anyone who becomes influenced by these calumnies will increase his offenses and will end up losing his taste for service to the Supreme Lord because they are, at their very root, inimical to Krishna, the guru and the Vaishnavas.

“(1) It is said that a certain dig-vijayi scholar, eager to amass mundane prestige, came to Rupa and Sanatan to get their signature as an admission of defeat in debate. Jiva’s gurus conceded defeat without any argument and the arrogant scholar proclaimed them to be nothing but ignorant fools. He then asked Jiva to also sign such an admission of defeat. Jiva, however, decided to take on the puffed-up Brahmin in debate in order to silence his scurrilous tongue. In this way, he preserved the integrity of his spiritual master’s reputation and demonstrated the ideal behavior of one who is guru-devatātmā, i.e., one who recognizes his spiritual master to be his worshipable deity and source of life. The ignorant Sahajiyas, however, say that Sri Jiva’s behavior goes contrary to Mahāprabhu’s teaching of being humbler than a blade of grass and of giving respect to others while demanding none for oneself. Indeed, Rupa Goswami chastised Jiva for this very reason and ostracized him for some time, but later



Sanatan interceded on Jiva's behalf and had Rupa accept him again into his association.

“Only when these enemies of the spiritual master and the Vaishnavas receive Krishna's mercy and begin to see themselves as their eternal servant, then will they also receive Jiva's blessings and be able to understand what it really means to be ‘humbler than a blade of grass’ and ‘a giver of respect to all’. Only then will they be eligible to chant the holy names in the proper way.

“(2) Some other ignorant Sahajiyas say that when he saw the manuscript of Chaitanya Charitamrita with its clear language and brilliant explanation of the divine devotional sentiments of Vraja, Jiva was afraid that it would hamper his own scholarly reputation and therefore threw it down a well in a spirit of mean-mindedness. Upon hearing of Jiva's action, Krishnadas Kaviraj Goswami was greatly shocked and immediately gave up his body. Krishnadas's disciple Mukunda had fortunately made a copy of the original manuscript and thus it was preserved and later published. Had he not done so, the Chaitanya Charitamrita would have been lost forever. This is another contemptible bit of invention based on an inimical attitude to the guru and Vaishnava. It has no basis in reality and there is no possibility of its being true.

“(3) According to other sense-obsessed fornicators, Srila Jiva Goswami should not be accepted as an exemplar because in his treatises, he opposed the idea that the gopis of Vrindavan were married to other men (the parakiya-vada), but rather supported the svakiya-vada. They say that he cannot be accepted as a rasika-bhakta, or a devotee who is knowledgeable in the divine sentiments.

“The fact is that during Jiva's lifetime, some of his followers demonstrated a preference for the sviya-vada. Jiva recognized their limitations and so, for their benefit and for the benefit of those in the future who would be unable to comprehend the transcendental nature of the parakiya-vada and would try to practice adulterous relationships themselves in imitation of Krishna, he accepted the svakiya doctrine. This is a sign of his acting as an acharya. One should not take this as evidence of his being opposed to the transcendental parakiya-vada, however, for he is the topmost of Rupa Goswami's followers and one of Krishnadas Kaviraj Goswami's spiritual teachers.” (Anubhasya, 1.10.85)

## **Rupa's mercy to Jiva**

Narahari has shown how Rupa Goswami instructed Jiva, punished him and then blessed him, in a story told in Bhakti-ratnakara:

One hot summer's day, while Rupa was writing Bhakti-rasamṛta-sindhu and Jiva fanning his perspiring body, Vallabha Bhatta came by to see Rupa Goswami. After reading some of Rupa's introductory verses, he offered to make corrections. When Vallabha went to the Yamuna to take a bath, Jiva followed him on the pretext of going to fetch water. In fact, he was angry because he considered Vallabha's proposal to be arrogant. He asked him what fault he had found in Rupa's verse. Vallabha told him and Jiva immediately showed him the flaws in his argument. A debate ensued in which Jiva countered every one of Vallabha's objections. When he came back to Rupa's hut, Vallabha told him how impressed he was with Jiva's scholarship, recounting the entire episode. Rupa gently rebuked Jiva, telling him to return to Bengal and to come back to Vrindavan only when he was sufficiently calm. Thus banished from his presence, Jiva left Rupa Goswami's dwelling, but rather than going back to the family home as he had been told, went to Nanda Ghaṭ, a nearby village. Hoping to regain his guru's favor, he began to practice rigorous austerities, worshiping Krishna intensely while fasting or eating only a bare minimum. As a result of such severe practices, his body became weak and sickly. One day, Sanatan Goswami came by there and was moved when he saw his condition. He took Jiva with him back to Rupa and interceded on his behalf with his brother. Thus Rupa and Jiva were reconciled and Jiva once again won Rupa's affectionate blessings.

Jiva Goswami's appearance day is on Bhadra Sukla Dvadasi, his disappearance day is Paush Sukla Tṛtiya. His deity, Radha Damodar, is still being worshiped in the Radha Damodar temple in Vrindavan. His samadhi tomb is on the grounds of the Radha Damodar temple and his bhajana-kuṭīra is preserved in Radha Kuṇḍ, near Lalita Kuṇḍ.

## Vrindavan Das Thakur

vedavyaso ya evasid daso vṛndavano'dhuna |  
sakha yaḥ kusumapiḍaḥ karyatas taṁ samavisat ||

Vedavyasa became Vrindavan Das Thakur. Krishna's friend Kusumapiḍa also entered into him for special purposes. (Gaura-gaṇoddesa-dipika 109)

Vedavyasa described Krishna-lila in the Srimad Bhagavatam. Non-different from Vyasa, Vrindavan Das described Mahaprabhu's lila in his Chaitanya Bhagavat. His book was first called Chaitanya Maṅgala, but when Locana Das gave the same name to his biography of the Lord, it was dubbed "Chaitanya Bhagavat".

## Vrindavan Das's mother, Narayaṇi

Vrindavan Das was born on the Kṛṣṇa-dvadasi of the month of Vaishakh in 1429 of the Saka era (1507 AD). Some say he was born in Mamgachi in the Nabadwip area, others say his birthplace was in Kumarahatta. His father was Vaikunthanatha Vipra, who originally came from Sylhet (Sylhet), his mother Narayaṇi Devi. Narayaṇi was the daughter of Srivasa Pandit's elder brother, Srinalina Pandit. Kavi Karṇapura has also mentioned her name in his Gaura-gaṇoddesa-dipika:

ambikayaḥ svasa yasin namna srila-kilimbika |  
kṛṣṇocchiṣṭaṁ prabhunjana seyaṁ narayaṇi mata ||

Kilimbika, who used to eat Krishna's remnants, was the younger sister of Krishna's nurse Ambika (Srivasa's wife, Malini). In Mahaprabhu's lila, she became Narayāṇi.

Narayāṇi also achieved fame because she received Gaurasundara's mercy when he gave her his remnants. When the Lord displayed his divine form in the Mahaprakasa in Srivasa Angan, Narayāṇi was only a small child of four, but the Lord made her intoxicated with the ecstasy of prema.

Whether born in Mamagachi or in Kumarahatta, Vrindavan Das later lived in the village of Denura, within the Matresvara precinct of Burdwan district. Thus Denura is considered to be his Sripaṭa. He spent some of his childhood with his mother in Mamagachi, at the home of his maternal grandparents where Narayāṇi was married. Vrindavan Das's Gaura-Nitai deities are still worshiped at the Mamagachi home. When his father died, he and his mother moved to Srivasa's house where he received Mahaprabhu's special blessings.

### **Vrindavan Das writes Chaitanya Bhagavat**

Because of the copious blessings he received from Nityananda Prabhu, Vrindavan Das is said to have been his initiated disciple.

Vrindavan Das is the recipient of Nityananda's blessings. He is the original Vyasa of Chaitanya's pastimes. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.20.82)

He wrote Chaitanya Bhagavat in 1535 AD. Krishnadas Kaviraj Goswami, the author of Chaitanya Charitamrita, has written the following in praise of Vrindavan Das Thakur:

Vrindavan Das, the son of Narayāṇi, wrote the Chaitanya Maṅgala. Vedavyasa described Krishna's life in the Srimad Bhagavatam and Vrindavan Das is the Vyasa of Chaitanya-lila. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 1.11.54-5)

Just as Vyasadeva compiled Lord Krishna's pastimes in Srimad Bhagavatam, Thakur Vrindavan Das depicted Lord Chaitanya's pastimes. His Chaitanya Maṅgala annihilates all misfortune. From it, I learned the wonders of Lord Chaitanya and Nityananda and came to know all the most subtle doctrines of devotional service to Krishna. Vrindavan Das Thakur has summarized the essence of the teachings of the Srimad Bhagavatam in his Chaitanya Maṅgala. If even a Muslim or an atheist should listen to Chaitanya Maṅgala, he immediately becomes a great Vaishnava. An ordinary human being could not have composed such a sublime work; Lord Chaitanya himself has spoken through the mouth of Vrindavan Das. I offer millions of obeisances unto the lotus feet of Vrindavan Das Thakur who has delivered the entire universe through his book. He was born in the womb of Narayāṇi who eternally enjoys Sri Chaitanya's remnants. How wonderful is his description of the activities of the Lord, simply by hearing which the three worlds have become sanctified! (Chaitanya Charitamrita 1.8.34-42)

Vrindavan Das became so absorbed in the description of Nityananda Prabhu's lila that he did not elaborately relate all of Mahaprabhu's activities, only summarizing them in abbreviated form. Krishnadas then elaborated on these undescribed activities in his Chaitanya Charitamrita.

Vrindavan Das the authorized biographer of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and equal to Srila Vyasadeva. He has described the Lord's pastimes in such a way as to make them sweeter and sweeter. I shall try as far as possible to fill in the accounts he left out of fear of excessively enlarging his book. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 1.13.48-9)

### **Vrindavan Das's criticisms of Vaishnava aparadha**

Vrindavan Das primarily Mahaprabhu's early activities such as his pastimes as a student, his childhood, his chastisement of the Qazi, his departure from Nabadwip, as well as some aspects of his life in Puri. Vrindavan Das Thakur demonstrated infinite mercy on the fallen souls by warning them:

eta parihare-o je papi ninda kare |

tabe lathi maron tar sirera upare ||

Even after being told how objectionable it is, if someone still blasphemes the Vaishnavas, then I will kick him in the head.

These same words are repeated in the Adi, Madhya and Antya-khaṇḍas of the Chaitanya Bhagavat. Some foolish and arrogant persons misunderstand such statements and criticize Vrindavan Das for having made them. Such criticism leads them into the mud of offensiveness.

In this connection, the remarks of Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur, the founder of the Sri Chaitanya Math and all the Gaudiya Maths, are well worth studying: “I am ready to kick the heads of those envious and hellish persons who blaspheme Nityananda Prabhu, if by so doing I will be able to forever prevent them from repeating their attempts to show disrespect for the Supreme Lord. Not only that, but if by so doing I can bring about a clear conception of the truth, I will be performing them the greatest service.’

“So says Vrindavan Das, the incarnation of Vyasa and acharya of the Vaishnava faith. If even a single fleck of dust should fall from his foot on the head of a sinful blasphemer, then that person will be blessed and all his sinful conditioning will inevitably be eradicated. In words which embody the Goddess of Learning and a flood of pure devotion, the Thakur reveals compassion for even the most atheistic blasphemer with the unswerving faith appropriate to a servant of Nityananda Prabhu, the supreme guru. He tells them that though they should be the object of indifference due to their foolishness, nevertheless, because of their ignorance of the truth of Nityananda, their insistence on rushing headlong on the path to hell, and their reluctance to act in their own real self-interest, he and other compassionate Vaishnavas like him who practice and preach the Lord’s doctrines unselfishly and disinterestedly act for their welfare. The compassion which is manifested in Vrindavan Das’s statement is beyond the comprehension of those who have no understanding of what is truly in their own self interest. Anyone who follows in the footsteps of Vrindavan Das, the incarnation of Vyasa, and both practices and preaches the Vaishnava religion is always engaged in an effort to bring about the ultimate well-being of everyone.

Though he may make a superficial show of wishing to punish the enemies of the Lord, in fact he harbors a compassion toward them which knows no limit.”

Vrindavan Das Thakur’s disappearance day is the Kṛṣṇa Dasami of Vaishakh. There is some dispute the exact year of his disappearance which was likely 1511 Saka (1589 AD).

## **Kavi Karṇapura (Sri Puri Das)**

Kavi Karṇapura is considered a branch of Chaitanya himself. His father was Mahaprabhu’s dear associate, Shivananda Sena. Karṇapura himself identifies his parents in his own Gaura-gaṇoddesa-dipika:

pura vṛndavane vira dati sarvas ca gopikaḥ |  
ninaya kṛṣṇa-nikaraṁ sedanīm janako mama ||  
vraje bindumati yasid adya sa janani mama ||

The go-between Vira, who previously brought all the gopis to Krishna, is my father. My mother was known as Bindumati. (Gaura-gaṇoddesa-dipika 176)

## **Paramananda Das or Puri Das**

Karṇapura did not give his own identity in Gaura-gaṇoddesa-dipika, but from his knowledge of his own parents’ identity, we can surmise that he was an associate of Krishna in Vraja as well. In the Vaiṣṇavacara-darpaṇa, it is written:

Kavikarṇapura was Guṇacuḍa Sakhi in Vraja. He is a branch of Chaitanya who lived in Kṃjacaṇapara. He accumulated spiritual power from Mahāprabhu when he placed the Lord's big toe in his mouth and was given the name Puri Das.

He was born in 1527 in the town of Kancana-palli. His father named him Paramananda Das, Paramananda Sena or Puri Das. He was the youngest of Shivananda Sena's three sons. His older brothers were named Chaitanya Das and Rama Das. All three brothers were devotees of Lord Sri Chaitanya. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 1.10.62)

Shivananda Sena's entire family was blessed with the Lord's unlimited mercy. The Lord himself told his other associates just how dear this family was to him when he ordered that as long as Shivananda and his family stayed in Puri, they should receive his remnants. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.12.53)

Kavi Karṇapura received the name Paramananda Das from Mahāprabhu himself. The Lord also jokingly called him Puri Das. This child was born as a result of Mahāprabhu's blessing.

The Lord asked Shivananda Sena the youngest son's name; Sena answered, "Paramananda Das." Previously, when Shivananda Sena had visited the Lord, the Lord had said to him, "The next time you have a son, name him Puri Das." The baby was already in his wife's womb and was born after Shivananda returned home. He named the child Paramananda Das in accordance with the Lord's wishes, and the Lord jokingly called him Puri Das. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.12.45-49)

### **Mahāprabhu gives the epithet Kavi Karṇapura**

The next year, when Shivananda Sena brought the baby to Mahāprabhu, the Lord showed the child much mercy by placing his big toe in his mouth. When Puri Das was only seven years old, the Lord himself gave him the title Kavi Karṇapura upon hearing the wonderful poetry that the child was capable of



composing. This has been described by Krishnadas Kaviraj Goswami in the sixteenth chapter of the Antya-lila.

One year, when Shivananda and his wife were in Puri for the Rathayatra, they came with Puri Das to see the Lord. The child paid obeisances to Mahaprabhu, and the Lord said to him, “Say Krishna, say Krishna!” Though the Lord asked him to chant repeatedly, the boy refused to utter the Holy Name. His embarrassed father also tried to get him to chant, but the child was steadfast in his refusal. Mahaprabhu himself was amazed and said, “I have made everyone in the universe, even the non-moving beings, chant the names of Krishna, but have been unable to make this little child do so. What on earth could be the reason?”

Svarupa Damodar suggested: “You have instructed him in Krishna’s name. Because it is forbidden to repeat one’s guru-given mantra aloud, he will not reveal it publicly and will only chant it mentally. I would guess that this is what he is thinking.”

The Lord was happy to see that such a young boy was aware of this scriptural injunction. In his Anubhaṣya, Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur has explained: “The mantra which one has received from the guru is not to be revealed to anyone else, otherwise it will lose its potency. We have seen this previously from the story about Gadadhara Pandit.” This is why Puri Das would not repeat the mantra which had been given to him by Mahaprabhu himself.

Mahaprabhu asked Puri Das to recite a verse in order to make him break his silence. The child recited the following verse of his own composition:

sravasoh kuvalayam akṣṇor  
anjanam uraso mahendra-maṇi-dama |  
vṛndavana-ramaṇinam  
maṇḍanam akhilaṁ harir jayati ||

All glories to Hari,

the ornament for all the beauties of Vrindavan --

a blue lotus for their ears,

black collyrium for their eyes,

and a necklace of blue sapphires

to decorate their breast. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.16.74)

All those who were present were charmed by the lovely verse. A small boy of seven who had barely commenced his education was yet able to recite a verse of such quality! The gods like Brahma and Shiva are unable to understand Mahaprabhu's mercy, what to speak of the ordinary jiva!

Though Kavi Karṇapura received the mantra of Krishna's name from Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, he nevertheless followed the social custom of taking initiation from Srinatha Chakravarti, who is a branch of Advaita Acharya on the Chaitanya tree. In the introduction to his Ananda-vṛndavana-campu, Karṇapura has paid his obeisances to Srinatha Chakravarti. In another introductory verse to that work, he has glorified Chaitanya Mahaprabhu as his family deity, saying that Mahaprabhu adopted Shivananda Sena's entire family as his own. Some people say that Srinatha Chakravarti's deities are still being worshiped in Kumarahatta or Kañcarapaṛa.

The following is a list of Kavi Karṇapura's compositions: Chaitanya-cartamṛta-mahakavya, Ananda-vṛndavana-campu, Alaṅkara-kaustubha, Chaitanya-candrodaya-nāṭaka, Gaura-gaṇoddesa-dipika, Bṛhad-gaṇoddesa-dipika, Arya-sataka, Ahnika-kaumudi, a commentary on the tenth canto of the Srimad Bhagavatam, Chaitanya-sahasra-nama and Kesavaṣṭaka. He was still writing books in 1576 AD, the date of the Chaitanya-candrodaya-nāṭaka.

Kavi Karṇapura, was dear to the Lord and became a writer of books in which he revealed the Lord's blessings on Sanatan Goswami. (Bhakti-ratnakara 1.657)

## **Sri Locana Das Thakur**

### **Family life**

Locana Das Thakur was born in 1523 in Kograma, in the Katwa block of Burdwan district. This village is about ten miles north of Guskara train station. The Thakur's home is situated near the Ajaya River.

His birth tithi is given by some as the first day of the fortnight of the waxing moon in Paush. He was born in the Raṛhiya clan of the physician caste (vaidya). His father's name was Kamalakara Das, his mother's Sadanandi. Locana Das studied at his maternal grandfather's house. He displayed devotion for Mahaprabhu from his childhood.

Locana Das was married at a very young age, according to the customs of that epoque. His in-laws' household was in the village of Amedpura Kakuṭa. However, though he had entered the married station, he was extremely renounced and spent all his time discussing Krishna-katha with other devotees of Gauranga.

Since Locana Das was married at a very early age, his wife at first remained with her parents, but as the time approached when she was to join him, they began to worry because of Locana Das's indifference to material life. They approached his guru Narahari Sarkara and told him of their disquiet. As a result, Narahari ordered Locana Das to go to his in-laws' home.

When Locana arrived in their village he was unable to remember where their house was, since it had been so long since he had visited. He asked a young girl in the street for directions, addressing her as "Ma", or "mother". When he arrived at his in-laws' house, he learned that the girl whom he had addressed as his mother was in fact his wife. From that day on, he always looked upon his wife as a mother, worshiping Guru and Gauranga in an attitude of renunciation.

## **The Chaitanya Maṅgala**

Narahari Sarakara Thakur, Mahaprabhu's famous associate from Srikhaṇḍa, was very affectionate to Locana Das and gave him initiation. Locana Das enthusiastically took up residence with his guru in Srikhaṇḍa. His guru taught him the art of kirtan and later ordered him to write Mahaprabhu's sacred biography. Locana Das took this order seriously and wrote the Chaitanya Maṅgala, the events of which are based on Murari Gupta's Chaitanya-carita.

The word maṅgala means auspicious and this title reflects the fact that hearing Mahaprabhu Sri Chaitanya's divine pastimes is the most auspicious activity for all the living beings. Vrindavan Das Thakur's biography of the Lord was first named Chaitanya Maṅgala and was only later known as Chaitanya Bhagavat. Locana Das gives an indication of this in the introductory portion of his book:

I attentively pay my obeisances to Vrindavan Das Thakur; his Bhagavat's songs have enchanted the entire universe. (CM Sutrakhaṇḍa, 1.35)

Some people believe that Locana Das and Krishnadas Kaviraj Goswami gave the name Chaitanya Bhagavat to Vrindavan Das's book. In the Chaitanya Maṅgala, Locana Das prays for his guru's blessings as follows:

Narahari Das Thakur is the proprietor of my life, and out of the hope of attaining his lotus feet, I desire to sing the glories of Gauranga, even though I am the lowest of the low. This is my ambition. (CM Sutrakhaṇḍa, 1.9)

I offer my reverences to Narahari Das, the ocean of Gauranga's qualities. Other than him, I have no friend in the three worlds. (Ibid., 1.33)

My lord and master is Narahari Das. I prostrate myself in humility to him. May he fulfill my desires. (Ibid., 1.61)

Locana Das wrote the Chaitanya Maṅgala in Eastern Bengal's Pancali style, completing it in 1537 AD. There is a legend that he wrote the book while sitting on a stone under a flower tree. In his new Bengali dictionary, Ashutosh Deb has underlined Locana Das's contribution by stating that he was the first to write Bengali poetry using moric metres as well as being one of the first historical writers in Bengali. The original manuscript of the Chaitanya Maṅgala is said to be found in the personal library of Praṇakṛṣṇa Chakravarti of Kandarā near the Guskara train station.

Other titles attributed to Locana Dâsa are Prarthana, Durlabha-sara, Dhamali, and Bengali verse translations of Ramananda's Jagannath-vallabha-naṭaka and the Rasa-pancadhyaya.

According to the Bhakti-ratnakara, Locana Das was present at Narahari Sarakara Thakur's disappearance festival and greeted guests by giving them sandalwood and garlands.

### **Locana Das's songs glorifying Nityananda**

In the Chaitanya Maṅgala, Locana Das describes his guru Narahari as being Mahaprabhu's dearest associate. He does not describe Nityananda's glories as extensively. Fearful that the neglect of Nityananda might be taken as offensive to his feet, he later wrote a few songs in his praise. These songs are particularly well appreciated by the devotees.

(1)

nitai guṇa-maṇi amara nitai guṇa-maṇi

aniya premera banya bhasala avani |

premera banya laiya nitai aila gauḍa-dese

ḍubila bhakata-gaṇa dina-hina bhase |

dina-hina patita-pamara nahi bache  
brahmara durlabha prema sabakare jace |  
abaddha karuṇa-sindhu nitai kaṭiya mohan  
ghare ghare bule prema amiyara bana |  
locana bale mora nitai je ba na bhajila  
janiya suniya sei atma-ghati haila ||

Nitai is the jewel of virtue, my Nitai is the jewel of virtue. He brought the deluge of love of God and flooded the world.

He brought the deluge of love of God to Gauḍadesa, flooding the devotees. The lowly and deprived are also floating.

He excluded not the lowly and deprived, nor the sinful and atheistic, but insisted that everyone take the gift of love which is beyond the reach of even Brahma.

Nitai cut the floodgates which held back the ocean of compassion, and went from door to door to give the nectar of love to everyone.

Locana Das says that anyone who has not worshiped my Nitai has committed suicide in full knowledge.

(2)

akrodha paramananda Nityananda Ray  
abhimana-sunya Nitai nagare beṛay |  
adhama patita jiver dvare dvare giya

harinama mahamantra dena bilaiya |  
jare dekhe tare kahe dante tṛṇa kari  
amare kiniya laha bhaja gaura-hari |  
eta bali Nityananda bhume paṛi jay  
sonara parvata jena dhulate loṭay |  
hena avatare jara rati na janmila  
locana bale sei papi ela ara gela ||

Lord Nityananda is free from anger and the embodiment of supreme joy. He wanders throughout the town without any pride or arrogance.

He knocks on every fallen person's door and bestows the maha-mantra of the Holy Names on him.

Placing straw between his teeth, he says to everyone he sees, "Worship Gaura Hari and you will purchase me and make me your slave."

Then he falls to the ground, looking like a golden mountain rolling in the dust.

Whoever lacks faith in such a compassionate incarnation is a sinner who will go as he has come, says Locana Das.

(3)

parama karuṇa	pahuṅ dui jana	nitai gauracandra
saba avatar	sara siromaṇi	kevala ananda kanda
bhaja bhaja bhai	caitanya nitai	sudṛḍha visvasa kari

viṣaya cāṛiya      se rase mājiya      mukhe bala hari hari ||  
dekha are bhai      tribhuvane nai      emana dayala data |  
pasu pakhi jure      paṣaṇa vidare      suni jara guṇa-gaṭha  
saṁsare mājiya      rahili pāriya      se pade nahila as |  
apana karama      bhunjaye saman      kahaye Locana dasa ||

Nitai and Gauracandra, are the two most compassionate lords. They are the essence of all incarnations, the crest-jewels of the avatars, the source of the unique joy of prema.

O brother! I implore you to worship Gaura-Nitai with firm faith. Give up your attachment to sense gratification and merge into this nectar by chanting the names of Hari.

Look, O brother! There is no benefactor in the three worlds who is as merciful as they. Even birds and animals are fulfilled by hearing their qualities, and stones melt.

Absorbed in the cycle of birth and death, you have fallen by the wayside without any hope for achieving their company. The lord of death will come and make you suffer the results of your activities — so sings Locana Das.

### **Gaura-nagara doctrine condemned**

Followers of certain heterodox groups or apasampradayas say that the Gaura-nagara doctrine is found in the Chaitanya Maṅgala. This is not true, however. Vrindavan Das Thakur writes in his Chaitanya Bhagavat: gaurāṅga nagara hena stava nahi bale -- “No one should praise the Lord by calling him the golden



playboy.” Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur comments: “Gaurasundara is Krishna who has been endowed with Radha’s bodily hue and her mood of love. Thus he never abandoned the qualities of the heart of Radha and the other gopis, i.e., the character of the asraya of devotion in the erotic mood. This means that he never acts like the viṣaya (‘object’) or bhokta (‘enjoyer’) of madhura-rasa by looking at other women in the spirit of a playboy.”

Locana Das ended his pastimes in this world in 1589 AD. A brick samadhi at his sripaṭa marks the place where his remains are buried.

## **Srila Krishnadas Kaviraj Goswami**

Krishnadas Kaviraj Goswami is the author of the Chaitanya Charitamrita, but has given us very little autobiographical information there. In his introduction to the Gaudiya Math’s edition of Chaitanya Charitamrita, Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur has written the following about Krishnadas’s antecedents: “We do not know the names of Krishnadas’s parents. Recently their names have been discovered, [FN: According to Ashutosh Deb’s Bengali Dictionary and Haridas Das’s Gauḍiya Vaiṣṇava Abhidhana, Krishnadas’s parents’ names were as Bhagiratha and Sunanda.] but no concrete evidence can be found to substantiate these claims. Krishnadas is his spiritual, not his family, name. He has given some autobiographical information in the fifth chapter of the Adi-lila, from which we learn that he was born in Jhamatpura, near the Salara railway station. Jhamatpura lies four miles west of Naihati in the Katwa block of Burdwan district. To this day, Krishnadas’s Gaura-Nitai deities are still worshiped in his home town, but there do not seem to be any descendants of his family still living there. He was ordered by Nityananda Prabhu in a dream to go to Vrindavan which is where he spent the remainder of his life. His samadhi tomb is on the grounds of the Radha-Damodar temple.” (Bhumika, ii.)

Nityananda Prabhu appeared to me in a dream in Jhamatpur, near Naihati. (1.5.181).

Srila Prabhupada Saraswati Goswami has established Krishnadas's dates by collating information from several sources. He concludes that he was probably born in about 1520 AD and died in about 1616 or 1617. Vrindavan Das Thakur appeared sometime after 1510 AD. Krishnadas's magnificent biography of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu was meant to serve as an appendix to his work.

### **Krishnadas's varṇasrama status**

There is some difference of opinion about Krishnadas's caste. Once again, Srila Prabhupada, Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur has discussed this point: "Supporters of different ideas claim that Krishnadas was born in one of the three upper castes (Brahmin, kayastha or vaidya). Kaviraj is a title given to those who have proven themselves by composing literary works which have achieved renown for their quality in learned circles. Since this title is also given to Ayurvedic physicians, some people hold that Krishnadas was a vaidya. It is difficult to contradict those who claim that he is a Brahmin on the basis of his extraordinary mastery of the scriptures and other branches of learning, of which Chaitanya Charitamrita is an eloquent testimonial. Nor is the view that he was a kayastha altogether illogical, as he reveals a soft spot for that caste when he praises its intelligence and managerial talents in the chapters about Raghunath Das Goswami's early life." (Bhumika, iii.)

From this above discussion, we can see that Krishnadas may have been born in any of these three castes. Whatever the case, a Vaishnava is a superior human being no matter in what caste he takes his birth.

All scriptures state that a Vaishnava is still the best of humankind. It does not matter in which caste he takes birth. That most sinful person who judges a Vaishnava in terms of his race or his caste will repeatedly be born in the lowest forms of life. (Chaitanya Bhagavat 2.10.100-2)

There is no unanimous opinion about Krishnadas's marital status, either. Some say that he was a lifelong brahmachari when he went to Vrindavan, for if he had left a wife and family he would likely have mentioned it when telling of his renunciation. Srila Prabhupada writes in this connection, "After arriving in

Vrindavan, Krishnadas became indifferent to talk about his previous family life and totally absorbed in Hari-katha. This behavior is appropriate for someone in the third or fourth station and completely committed to the devotional life. The Chaitanya Charitamrita is the composition of someone who has reached the status of a paramahansa and is completely beyond the four asramas. He was known as Kaviraj Goswami to his spiritual family. His spiritual identity in Vraja lila is Ratnarekha Manjari, or Kasturi Manjari according to others.

From Krishnadas's statements in the Chaitanya Charitamrita, we also learn that he had a brother. Krishnadas does not give his name, but Hari Das Das writes in the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava Abhidhana that he was called Syama Das Kaviraj.

### **Krishnadas's vision of Nityananda Prabhu**

In the course of his glorification of Nityananda Prabhu in the Chaitanya Charitamrita, Krishnadas Kaviraj Goswami describes the crucial event in his life. Krishnadas had organized a 24-hour kirtan at his house and amongst those invited was Lord Nityananda's dear associate, Minaketan Rama Das, who also lived in Jhamatpura.

Minaketan was a great Vaishnava who was in a constant state of devotional trance as he chanted the name of Nityananda Prabhu. In his ecstatic mood, he would sometimes hit people with his flute and sometimes slap them. In general, his ecstatic behavior was the cause of some astonishment amongst Krishnadas's guests and most came to pay their obeisances and offer him their respects. Only Guṇarṇava Mishra, who had been engaged at the festival as a pujari, did not demonstrate a respectful attitude. This behavior was an indication that Guṇarṇava Mishra had no faith in Nityananda Prabhu. Rama Das became angry and criticized Mishra, saying,

"Just look! A second Romaharṣaṇa Suta who did not come forward to show respect when he saw Balaram!" (Chaitanya Charitamrita 1.5.170)

Guṇarṇava Mishra was pleased to have been chastised by Rama Das and simply

continued in the performance of his service to the Deity. At the end of the kirtan festival, when Guṇarṇava Mishra had left, however, Krishnadas Kaviraj's brother got into an argument with Minaketan Rama Das about what had happened. Krishnadas's brother had strong faith in Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, but lacked similar faith in Nityananda. Upon hearing this, Rama Das was deeply wounded and he became so angry that he broke his flute and left. The result of this curse was that Krishnadas's brother was doomed to completely losing any devotional attitude whatsoever. Krishnadas Kaviraj, however, took the side of Nityananda Prabhu's associate and rebuked his brother:

"These two brothers [Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and Nityananda Prabhu] are like one body; they are equal in their spiritual manifestation. If you do not accept the divinity of Lord Nityananda, you will fall down. To have faith in one but to disrespect the other is as logical as accepting half a hen. Better you should be an atheist by denying the divinity of both than a hypocrite who believes in one and not the other." (Chaitanya Charitamrita 1.5.175-7)

The Lord is influenced by his devotees and he gives great importance to even the slightest display of attachment, bestowing upon them all that they desire. Krishnadas Kaviraj Goswami writes that by taking the part of Nityananda Prabhu's associate and chastizing his brother, he won the blessings of Nityananda Prabhu himself. Nitai came to him in a dream and ordered him to go to Vrindavan.

"O Krishnadas! Have no fear. Go to Vrindavan, for there you will attain all things." After saying this, he indicated the way to Vrindavan by waving his hand and then disappeared with his associates. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 1.5.195-6)

By way of contrast, a person who holds devotees in contempt, though he show all the customary virtues is eternally deprived of the Lord's blessings. The example is the zamindar Ramachandra Khan, who committed offenses to Hari Das Thakur, as a result of which he incurred Nityananda Prabhu's displeasure. Not only did he lose everything, but his house was razed completely, leaving no remnants. Only a foolish person who lacks discrimination would be so bold as to behave unjustly toward a saintly person.

With words of profound humility, Krishnadas Kaviraj Goswami proclaims the glories of Nityananda Prabhu:

I am more sinful than Jagai and Madhai and lower than a maggot in stool. Whoever hears my name loses the results of his virtuous deeds, and whoever utters my name commits a sin. Other than Nityananda, could anyone in this world show mercy to one as abominable as me? Nityananda is the incarnation of mercy; he is so intoxicated by ecstatic love that he does not discriminate between the good and the bad. He delivers anyone who fall down before him. Therefore he has delivered such a sinful and fallen person as me. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 1.5.205-9)

### **Krishnadas writes the final pastimes of the Lord**

Without the mercy of Vishnu and the Vaishnavas, it is impossible to describe their glories. It is for this reason that Krishnadas Kaviraj Goswami begins each chapter of the Chaitanya Charitamrita with invocations to Mahaprabhu and his associates like Nityananda Prabhu, Advaita Acharya, and concludes each chapter with a prayer for the service to the feet of Rupa and Raghunath Goswamis. He thus showed how important it is to avoid any disrespect or offense to the Vaishnavas.

The activities of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu are by nature wonderful and sweet. When described by Vrindavan Das Thakur, they become a shower of nectar. To describe them again would not only be repetition, but a display of arrogance, for I do not possess his powers. I shall thus only present a synopsis of those events already described fully by Vrindavan Das in his Chaitanya Mangala. I shall do my best to fully describe in this book only those incidents mentioned in his outline which he did not develop. I therefore offer respectful obeisances unto the lotus feet of Vrindavan Das Thakur, praying that I will not offend his lotus feet by my action. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.4.5-9)

Just as Vyasadeva compiled Lord Krishna's pastimes in Srimad Bhagavatam, Thakur Vrindavan Das depicted Lord Chaitanya's pastimes.... I offer millions of obeisances unto the lotus feet of Vrindavan Das Thakur who has delivered the entire universe through his book. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 1.8.35,40)

Vrindavan Das the authorized biographer of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and

equal to Srila Vyasadeva. He has described the Lord's pastimes in such a way as to make them sweeter and sweeter. I shall try as far as possible to fill in descriptions he left out due to his fear of his book's becoming too voluminous. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 1.13.48-9)

In his foreword to the edition of the Chaitanya Charitamrita published by the Sri Chaitanya Gaudiya Math, the president of the editorial board of Chaitanya Vani magazine, H. H. Bhakti Pramoda Puri Goswami Maharaj, has written:

“Vrindavan Das Thakur wrote an elaborate outline of Mahaprabhu's lila at the beginning of the Chaitanya Bhagavat, but as he became absorbed in describing Nityananda's activities, many events mentioned in the outline were left out of the final version of the book. Mahaprabhu's Vrindavan devotees approached Krishnadas Kaviraj, asking him to write down a full version of these pastimes, for if it were not done, they would be forgotten. Krishnadas then went to the deity of Madana Mohana and asked him for permission to do as he had been asked. In front of all the prominent contemporary members of the Gaudiya community in Vrindavan, the garland fell from Madana Mohana's neck. This was taken by all who were present as a sign of the Lord's approval and they let out a joyous cheer. Madana Mohana's pujari picked up the garland and placed it on Krishnadas's chest. Joyfully taking the garland as a symbol of the Deity's wishes, Krishnadas began to write his biography of the Lord. Thus he has written in great humility,

Chaitanya Charitamrita is being dictated to me by Madana Mohana. My writing is like the repetition of a parrot. I write as Madana Gopal orders me, just as a wooden marionette is made to dance by a puppeteer. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 1.8.78-9)

In writing Chaitanya Charitamrita, Krishnadas made use of Svarupa Damodar's notes, which Raghunath Das Goswami had memorized. Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur has described this as follows: “Sri Svarupa Damodar Goswami wrote an outline in Sanskrit (karca) of Mahaprabhu's later activities. He had Raghunath memorize these verses and told him to preach them throughout the world. These verses were not written down anywhere else, however. The Chaitanya Charitamrita is the gist of Svarupa Damodar's karca.

Though I am an insignificant living being, through the blessings of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu I have summarized in writing everything that Svarupa Damodar recorded in his notes about the Lord's pastimes, as well as everything that I heard from the mouth of Raghunath Das. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.3.269-70)

Lord Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's glorious name, form, qualities and activities all manifest in Krishnadas Kaviraj's heart, which he then published in the Chaitanya Charitamrita. He himself stated this fact in various places throughout the book:

I am now an old man and an invalid. My hand trembles as I write and my memory fails me. I am going blind and deaf, but still I manage to write and this is a great wonder. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.2.90)

While Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur was once glorifying the superlative character of Chaitanya Charitamrita to his disciples, he instructed them as follows: "If it were to happen that all the books in the world were destroyed, leaving only Srimad Bhagavatam and Chaitanya Charitamrita, then the people of this world would still be able to achieve the ultimate goal in life. Even if the Srimad Bhagavatam were lost, leaving only the Chaitanya Charitamrita, there would be no loss to humanity, for that which has not been revealed in the Bhagavat is found in Chaitanya Charitamrita. The supreme absolute truth is Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, the combined form of Radha and Krishna. The Chaitanya Charitamrita is his sound incarnation. The divine mystery of Radharani's divine status and glories are found therein. Can there be any doubt, therefore, of the supreme status of this piece of transcendental literature?"

This statement underscores the supremely special status of Krishnadas Kaviraj Goswami himself. His three books, Chaitanya Charitamrita, Govinda-lilamṛta and a commentary on Krishna-karṇamṛta, are all priceless works. Govinda-lilamṛta describes in detail Lord Krishna's activities over a twenty-four-hour period. Narottama Das Thakur has therefore stated:

kṛṣṇadasa kaviraja, rasika bhakata majh

jeñho kaila caitanya-carita |

gaura-govinda-lila, sunite galaye sila

tahate na haila mora cita ||

Krishnadas Kaviraj Goswami stands out amongst the devotional literati, for he is the author of the biography of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. He described both Gaura and Govinda's lila, hearing which even a stone would melt. Alas, even so, my mind has not been attracted by these works. (Prema-bhakti-candrika)

Krishnadas was honored with the title kaviraja ("king of poets") for his Govinda-lilamṛta. He is also respected in the Vaishnava world as the best amongst the followers of Rupa Goswami.

### **The authoritativeness of the Chaitanya Charitamrita**

From the illustrious commentator Vishvanath Chakravarti's ṭika to the Chaitanya Charitamrita, we can understand a little better just how dear Krishnadas Kaviraj Goswami was to Radharani, and by the same token, how the deepest and most esoteric truths of the Divinity were revealed to him, showing that every word he wrote is to be taken as the supreme spiritual truth. H. H. Bhakti Pramoda Puri Maharaj has recounted the following anecdote in his foreward to the Chaitanya Gaudiya Math edition of the Chaitanya Charitamrita: "While Vishvanath Chakravarti was writing his commentary on the Chaitanya Charitamrita, Madhya-lila 21.125, he was unable to understand why Kaviraj Goswami had written that the kama-gayatri mantra consists of 24½ syllables rather than 25. He became so distraught by his inability to comprehend that he finally took a vow to starve to death by the banks of Radha Kuṇḍ. As he dozed off in the middle of the night, the daughter of Vṛṣabhanu appeared to him in a dream and said to him, 'O Vishvanath! Get up. Krishnadas has indeed written correctly. He is my dear girlfriend, who brings me much pleasure. I have blessed him so that he can understand the most intimate truths about myself. Do not doubt anything he has written. In the book named Varṇagama-bhasvat, it is written that whenever the syllable ya is followed by the syllable vi, it is considered to be only half a syllable.'"



In the Bhakti-ratnakara it is mentioned that Srinivas Acharya met Krishnadas Kaviraj, Raghunath Das Goswami and Sri Raghava when he arrived in Vrindavan (Bhakti-ratnakara 4.392).

On the grounds of Krishnadas Kaviraj's home in Jhamatpura is a small temple containing Nityananda's footprints. Local legend has it that Krishna-Das received Nityananda's mercy, i.e., initiation into the mantra, at this very spot. According to the Prema-vilasa, however, Krishnadas took initiation from Raghunath Das Goswami. In the temple there is a wooden sandal which is said to have been Krishnadas's. His cottage and samadhi tomb are in Radha Kuṇḍ. His disappearance took place after that of Raghunath Das Goswami, on the Sukla Dvadasi tithi of the month of Asvina.

## Sri Jahnava Devi

sri-varuṇi-revata-varṁsa-sambhave

tasya priye dve vasudha ca jahnavi |

sri-surya-dasasya mahatmanah sute

kakudma-rupasya ca surya-tejasah ||

anaṅga-manjarim kecij jahnavam ca pracakṣate |

ubhayam tu samicinam purva-nyayat satam matam ||

Balaram's wives Varuṇi and Revati became Vasudha and Jahnavi, the two wives of Nityananda Prabhu, in Chaitanya-lila. Both of them were the daughters of Surya Das, who was as effulgent as the sun. He was Kakudman, the father of Revati, in his previous birth. According to another opinion, Jahnava was the incarnation of Anaṅga Manjari. Both these opinions are possible, as we have shown that more than one identity can be joined in associates of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. (Gaura-gaṇoddesa-dipika 65-6)

Jahnava's father was Surya Das Sarakhela. According to the Gauḍiya Vaiṣṇava Abhidhana, her mother's name was Bhadravati. Surya Das's Sripaṭa is in the village of Saligrama, which is not far from Nabadwip, situated close to the Muragacha station on the Eastern Railway. Surya Das was the third son of Kamsari Mishra. His older brothers were Damodar and Jagannath, his younger brothers, Gauri Das, Krishna Das Sarakhela and Nrisingha Chaitanya.

Saligrama is not far from Nabadwip. Surya Das Pandit made his home there. He held an important post in the service of the king of Gauḍa, as a result of which he was given the title Sarakhela ('commander') and earned a large amount of money. Surya Das and his brothers were all very pure in their character and they had a spotless reputation. His virtues are innumerable. His daughters were Vasudha and Jahnava. (Bhakti-ratnakara 12.3875-8)

Surya Das Sarakhela and Krishna Das were brothers who both had great faith in Nityananda and were filled with love for Krishna. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 1.11.25)

Surya Das Sarakhela was a magnanimous devotee whose brother was Gauri Das Pandit. Gauri Das took his permission to come and live in Ambika on the banks of the Ganges. (Bhakti-ratnakara 7.330-1)

### **Nityananda Prabhu's wedding**

Narahari Chakravarti Thakur has written about Jahnava Devi's holy life at length in his Bhakti-ratnakara. Every manifestation of Vishnu-tattva has three energies which are known as Sri, Bhu, and Nila or Lila. Nityananda Prabhu is also Vishnu-tattva and possesses these three energies. In the 12th Taraṅga of the Bhakti-ratnakara, Lord Nityananda's wedding is described as taking place according to human custom. The essence of that description is as follows.

A certain kayastha named Krishna Das, the son of Harihoṛa of Baṛagachi, a village near Saligrama, took the responsibility of seeking a wife for Nityananda Prabhu. A certain elderly Brahmin from Saligrama saw that Surya Das was worried about finding a suitable husband for his two daughters and made the

following suggestion: “In the village of Ekacakra in Rarhadesa are a couple named Harai Pandit and Padmavati Devi. They were Vasudeva and Rohini in their previous lives in Krishna-lila. Balaram has become incarnate as their son, Nityananda. Nitai travelled to all the places of pilgrimage and performed many austerities and became a great scholar before coming to Nabadwip and becoming Chaitanya Mahaprabhu’s dearest associate. He is the eternal husband of your two daughters.”

In a dream, Surya Das also had a vision of Nityananda as Balaram with Vasudha and Jahnavi standing to his left and right in their forms as Revati and Varuṇi. When Surya Das took the Brahmin’s advice seriously and offered the two girls to Nityananda’s lotus feet, Nityananda Prabhu mercifully gave him the same vision directly. Surya Das fainted in ecstasy.

He saw Vasudha and Jahnavi as Varuṇi and Revati, whose forms were more effulgent than mountains of gold and kunkum. Standing to the left and right of Balaram, they were decorated in magnificent jewelry and bedecked in fine, colorful clothes. Nityananda revealed this magnificence to his devotee in order to give him joy, and Surya Das completely forgot himself in his ecstasy. (Bhakti-ratnakara 12.3908-10)

The adhivasa rituals on the eve of the wedding were conducted in the house of Krishna Das Sarakhela in Saligrama. All the Brahmins of Baṛagachi and Saligrama were present there.

The fortunate Surya Das Sarakhela gave his two daughters away to Nityananda Prabhu according to the religious rites and popular custom. (Bhakti-ratnakara 12.3983)

At Sachi Mata’s request, Nityananda Prabhu stayed for some time after his wedding in Shantipur before moving to Saptagram, where he stayed with Uddharan Datta, and then establishing a permanent residence at Khardaha on the banks of the Ganges.

Jahnavi Devi herself had no sons, but Nityananda’s Sakti Vasudha Devi gave birth to Virabhadra (or Viracandra) Goswami and Ganga Devi, who are the incarnations of Kṣīrodakasayi Vishnu and the river Ganges, respectively. According to the Gaura-gaṇoddesa-dipika (69), Ganga Devi’s husband

Madhavacharya is an incarnation of King Santanu.

### **Jahnava Devi's glories**

Virabhadra Goswami was inundated with Jahnava Mata's mercy, becoming her direct initiated disciple. Nityananda Das writes in his Prema-vilasa that when Virabhadra saw Jahnava in a four-armed form that his mind was changed and he decided to accept her as his diksha guru.

Without the mercy of Nityananda Prabhu's energy Jahnava Devi, no one is able to cross over the ocean of material life, nor can one obtain the service of Nityananda Prabhu and enter into the loving service of his worshipable Gaurahari and Radha Krishna. Bhaktivinoda Thakur has written in his Kalyana-kalpa-taru:

O Jahnava Devi! Be merciful to this servant today. Deliver me from my pain and give me a place in the boat of your lotus feet so that I can be sure to cross over the ocean of birth and death. You are Nityananda's energy, you are devotion to Krishna and my guru. Please give this servant the desire tree of your lotus feet. How numerous are the fallen souls that you have saved, so this fallen beggar seeks a place at your feet.

The mahajana Krishna Das, in his song which begins jaya Radhe jaya Krishna jaya Vrindavan, has prayed for Jahnava Devi's mercy after glorifying Krishna's name, abode and associates. "Remembering Jahnava Devi's lotus feet, the lowly Krishna Das sings the names of the Lord."

### **Jahnava Devi's travels**

Jahnava was present when Narottama Das Thakur put on a great festival at Kheturi village to install the deities on Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's appearance day. Indeed, the installation of the deities took place under her direction. She also supervised and personally participated in the cooking of the first offering and made the first offering to the deities. She served the prasada to the assembled mahantas.

Jahnava Isvari rose early that morning in great delight and took her bath and did her mantra meditation. Then she began to cook innumerable vegetable preparations with great enthusiasm. (Bhakti-ratnakara 10.686-7)

All of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's personal associates from Bengal were very happy to see Narottama Das. Jahnava Devi, the daughter of Surya Pandit and wife of Nityananda Prabhu, worshiped by the entire universe, expert in the distribution of the pearl of prema, was delighted to hear his name. Her joy increased when she observed his uncommon love for Krishna and his renunciation. Out of her mercy, she came to Kheturi, satisfying everyone by being present there and giving her darshan to all. How can a fallen person like myself fully describe the compassionate nature of Srimati Jahnava Devi. (Bhakti-ratnakara 1.429-34)

Jahnava Devi's travels are described in the eleventh Taraṅga of Bhakti-ratnakara. On the road from Kheturi to Braj she stopped in a prosperous village where she delivered some atheistic unbelievers and criminals and bestowed Krishna-prema upon them. When she arrived in Vrindavan, she saw the samadhi of Gauri Das Pandit which moved her to tears. When in Vrindavan, the leaders of the Vaishnava community such as Jiva Goswami, Gopal Bhatta Goswami, Lokanatha Goswami, Bhugarbha Goswami, Madhu Pandit, etc., all came to offer her their respectful greetings. Taking these leaders with her, she visited the principle temples of Vrindavan -- Madana Mohana, Govinda and Gopinath -- before going to Radha Kuṇḍ. There she met Raghunath Das Goswami, who was engaged in constant chanting of the Holy Names, and whose body was emaciated by his austerities.

Jahnava remained in Radha Kuṇḍ for three days engaged in bhajana. She heard the sound of Krishna's flute while sitting on the banks of the tank and had a vision of Sri Krishna which overwhelmed her with waves of divine love. The

ghaṭ where Jahnava bathed and had this vision is today known as Sri Jahnava Ghaṭ. She then took the company of Vaishnavas on a parikrama of Vraja-maṇḍala. During this parikrama she heard Jiva Goswami discourse on Bṛhad-Bhagavatamṛta.

After her visit to Braj, Jahnava returned to Gauḍa-desa where she visited numerous villages. She spent three or four days in Kheturi (Narottama Das's home), some time in Budhuri (the home of Ramachandra Kaviraj in Murshidabad district), the place of Nityananda's birth in Ekacakra (Birbhum), Katwa (where Mahaprabhu took sannyas and where she met Yadunandana Acharya), Jajigrama (Srinivas Acharya's home village), Srikhaṇḍa (the home of Raghunandan Thakur, son of Narahari Sarkara Thakur), Nabadwip, Ambika, Saptagram (where she visited Uddharan Datta's house) before finally returning to Khardaha. There she recounted the story of her entire voyage to Vasudha and Virabhadra Goswami.

By Jahnava Devi's mercy, Nityananda's dear associate Paramesvari Das Thakur was fortunate enough to see Gopinath united with Radharani in Vrindavan. When he returned to Khardaha and told what he had seen to Jahnava and Vasudha, Jahnava was overwhelmed with loving ecstasies. She instructed him to immediately go to the village of ṁAtpur and to install deities of Radha and Gopinath there.

Jahnava Devi arranged for Virabhadra's marriage to Yadunandana Acharya's two daughters, Srimati and Narayaṇi, both of whom became disciples of Jahnava.

Nityananda's sakti, Srimati Jahnava Devi disappeared on the sukla navami tithi of Vaishakh.

## **Sri Viracandra Prabhu (Virabhadra)**

saṅkarṣaṇasya yo vyuhaḥ payobdhi-sayi-namakaḥ |

sa eva viracandro'bhuc caitanyabhinna-vigrahaḥ ||

The expansion of Sankarshan who sleeps on the ocean of milk, Kṣīrodakasayi Vishnu, has become Viracandra, who is not different from Chaitanya himself. (Gaura-gaṇoddesa-dipika 67)

The Supreme Personality of Godhead, Sri Krishna, is the origin of unlimited expansions and incarnations. He is the avatari. His first expansion is the root Sankarshan or Balaram. This same Balaram appeared with Lord Chaitanya as Nityananda Prabhu. Balaram's expansion Maha-Sankarshan has his abode in the Vaikuntha planets, and he in turn expands as the puruṣavataras in the work of creation of the universe, first as the Karaṇodakasayi Vishnu, who lies in the causal ocean, then as Garbhodakasayi Vishnu, who lies in the ocean within the individual universes, and finally as the Kṣīrodakasayi Vishnu, who not only lies in the ocean of milk, but is the director of the individual universe and is present as the indweller of every living being within the universe. He is also known as Aniruddha and, in the course of Mahaprabhu Sri Chaitanya's pastimes, appeared as Virabhadra Prabhu, the son of Lord Nityananda and his energy, Vasudha Devi.

Krishna Das Kaviraj Goswami has written in his Chaitanya Charitamrita that Virabhadra is the best of all the branches of Nityananda trunk of the tree of devotional service which grew with Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's pastimes.

The best of all of Nityananda's branches is Virabhadra Goswami. The subbranches which grew out of him are unlimited in number. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 1.11.56)

As with all Vishnu-tattvas, in Virabhadra's life the three energies, Sri, Bhu (or Bhakti), and Nila (or Lila) Sakti, are present. Virabhadra's Sri-sakti was named Srimati, who appeared in the village of Jhamatpur in Hooghly district as the daughter of Yadunatha Acharya and Vidyunmala (or Lakshmi).

Yadunandana's wife Lakshmi was extremely chaste and devoted to her husband. Two daughters were born to her, Srimati and Narayani, both of whom were startlingly beautiful. At Jahnava's behest, the fortunate Brahmin gave both of his daughters in marriage to Virabhadra. (Bhakti-ratnakara 13.251-3)

Though Virabhadra belongs to the category of Vishnu-tattva, it is his lila to behave like a devotee:

The greatest branch coming out of the trunk named Nityananda is Virabhadra Goswami, who also has innumerable branches and subbranches. It is not possible to describe them all. Although he is the Lord of the creation, Virabhadra presented himself as a great devotee. Though transcendental to all Vedic injunctions, he strictly followed the Vedic religion. Though the power of God was operating within him, out of sight to the world, he showed no pride. He is the main pillar holding up the edifice of devotional service to Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. It is by the glorious mercy of Sri Virabhadra Goswami that people all over the world now have the chance to chant the names of Chaitanya and Nityananda. I therefore take shelter of the lotus feet of Virabhadra Goswami for by his mercy all desires are fulfilled. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 1.11.8-12)

Sri Narahari Chakravarti Thakur has written the following about Virabhadra in his Bhakti-ratnakara:

Nityananda Prabhu had a single son, Virabhadra, who was an ocean of virtue and capable of purifying the world. Who can sufficiently glorify him, for there is no limit to his glories? He is famed as the branch of the Nityananda Prabhu... He is the root of all joy, is sometimes known as Virabhadra and sometimes as Viracandra. If anyone sees him even once he will give up everything and make his lotus feet his all-in-all in life. (Bhakti-ratnakara 9.413-4, 420-1)

Virabhadra took initiation from his aunt and stepmother, Jahnava Devi. In his Anubhasya, Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur has written, “Virabhadra Goswami had three disciples who were later celebrated as his sons—Gopijana-vallabha, Ramakṛṣṇa and Ramachandra. The youngest, Ramachandra, belonged to the Saṅḍilya dynasty and had the surname Baṭavyala. He established his family at Khardaha, and its members are known as the gosvamis of Khardaha. The eldest disciple, Gopijana-vallabha, was a resident of a village known as Lata, near the Manakara railway station in the district of Burdwan. The second, Ramakṛṣṇa, lived near Maladaha, in a village named Gayesapura.”

It is described in the thirteenth chapter of the Bhakti-ratnakara that Virabhadra took permission from his mother Vasudha to go to Vrindavan. He did the Vraja Dham parikrama with the blessings of Bhugarbha and Sri Jiva Goswamis.

At Khardaha, the old Shyamasundar temple has a manuscript of the



Bhagavat which is said to have been handwritten by Virabhadra Prabhu. Some hold that this was actually written by Nityananda Prabhu himself. Virabhadra personally brought a piece of stone from which the deities worshiped there were carved. Their names are Shyamasundar, Radhavallabha, and Nandadulala. The quay on the Ganges where this stone was unloaded and brought on shore is known as Shyamasundar Ghaṭ. Virabhadra established the custom of celebrating the birth of Nityananda Prabhu at Khardaha. The current managers of the Khardaha temple have many other legends about the life of Virabhadra Goswami.

The date of Virabhadra's appearance is given as Karttik kṛṣṇa navami. The Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava Abhidhana gives the date as Agrahayan sukla caturdasi.

## **Srila Gopal Guru Goswami**

Gopal Guru Goswami was born in an Orissan Brahmin family. His father's name was Murari Pandit. His mother's name is unknown. While still a child, he had the opportunity to serve Mahaprabhu through Govinda, the Lord's servant. His original name was Makaradhvaja Pandit, but Mahaprabhu used to affectionately call him Gopal. His name is found in neither the Chaitanya Charitamrita nor the Chaitanya Bhagavat.

He was initiated by Vakresvara Pandit, one of the Lord's close associates living in Jagannath Puri. [FN. See vol. 1, chapter 16] This is confirmed in the book Vakresvara-carita, where the following passage is found:

There are five branches in the lineage descending from Vakresvara Pandit--those coming from Chandrasekhara, Saṅkararāya Acharya, Govindananda, Devananda and Gopal Guru, whose qualities are beyond description.

From the book Guru-praṇali which is published by the Radhakanta Math, we learn that Gopal Guru Goswami's identity in Vraja-lila was as the sakhi Manjumedha.

## **How he got the name Gopal Guru**

There is a legend surrounding the addition of the word guru to his name.

There was once a devotee in Puri who was particularly attached to the chanting of the Holy Names. As a matter of fact, the chanting had become automatic for him, so that his tongue muttered the names incessantly. One day Gopal Guru saw this devotee on his way to the toilet, holding his tongue between his fingers because he did not wish to chant the Holy Name while engaged in an impure act. Gopal Guru was just a lad, but he was able to understand why the devotee was doing this and he said to him, “What are you doing? Don’t you know that there are no regulations governing the time and place for chanting the Holy Name? One should chant the Name in all times and circumstances, pure or impure. If you were not able to chant while defecating, how would you be able to have an auspicious death, should death suddenly come upon him at that time?”

Mahaprabhu overheard Gopal sharing this wisdom with the Vaishnava and was very impressed and he announced to all his devotees that Gopal was doing the work of a guru. From that day on, the young Makaradhvaja Pandit was known as Gopal Guru. Because he both preached and practiced, he was factually acting as an acharya or guru.

It did not take long for his fame to spread through the Vaishnava world. Abhiram Thakur had the reputation of being able to verify whether a stone was a real Vishnusila or Salagrama sila by paying his obeisances to it. If not real, it would crack or turn into dust. Only a pure Vaishnava would be able to tolerate his obeisances, otherwise they could prove fatal. When the Vaishnavas heard that Abhiram Thakur had come to Puri to test Gopal Guru, they were anxious for the boy due to their affection for him. Mahaprabhu realized that everyone was troubled and so he placed his foot on Gopal’s forehead, thus creating the distinctive tilaka marking which is used by those in Gopal Guru’s spiritual lineage. Gopal was still frightened and sat in the Lord’s lap for protection. Thus Abhiram’s obeisances did him no harm.

## **The service of Radhakanta Deva**

Maharaj Prataparudra's father Purushottam Deva brought several deities back from Kanci with him after defeating that city's king. Among these deities was the murti of Radhakanta. This deity was first placed in a small temple on the northwestern corner of Jagannath's Chatrabhoga temple, but later, Prataparudra's guru Kashi Mishra asked to be given the deity for his personal service. Kashi Mishra had bequeathed everything he possessed to Mahaprabhu as he had no children of his own. Mahaprabhu then gave the service of Radhakanta, his temple and the surrounding gardens, etc., to Gopal Guru. His guru, Vakresvara Pandit, himself never sat on the gadi, i.e., never acted as acharya, at Radhakanta Math. Rather, he stayed absorbed in kirtan and dancing in the company of Mahaprabhu.

The tithi marking Mahaprabhu's bestowal of Radhakanta's service on Gopal Guru is celebrated on the Sukla Dvadasi of Magh. On this day, he also gave him the post of first acharya of the Radhakanta Math and the occasion is marked annually by an abhishek of the present-day abbot of the Math.

Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur has written the following about Gopal Guru Goswami: "Vakresvara Pandit's disciple Gopal Guru Goswami is currently abbot of Mahaprabhu's own math in the house of Kashi Mishra in Purushottam. He has completely memorized the teachings of Sri Svarupa Damodar Goswami." (Jaiva Dharma)

Svarupa Damodar's method of worshiping in the madhura-rasa was spread through the world through two different lines: one through Raghunath Das Goswami which was carried through Krishna Das Kaviraj Goswami, the other through Vakresvara Pandit and Gopal Guru Goswami. Gopal Guru wrote two books on the subject, Smaraṇa-krama-paddhati ("A guidebook to the steps to remembering") or Seva-smaraṇa-paddhati ("A guidebook to remembering and service") and Gaura-govindarcana-paddhati ("A guidebook to Gaura-Govinda's deity worship").

From the time of Gopal Guru, Kashi Mishra's house was known as

Radhakanta Math. During Kashi Mishra's lifetime, there was only a single deity of Krishna. From the time of Gopal Guru, a deity of Radha was placed at Radhakanta's left side and a deity of Lalita on his right. Deities of Gauranga and Nityananda were also installed. The temple buildings were repaired and enlarged during this time, between 1538 and 1548 AD.

In the Orissan language a small separate room situated on temple grounds is given the name gambhira. Bhaktivinoda Thakur has written, "In the customary architecture of a temple in Orissa, the deity room itself has a verandah (alinda) facing it. Facing the verandah is a paved and covered area known as the dalana. A small room within this area is given the name gambhira." The Gambhira at Kashi Mishra's house marks the place where Mahaprabhu performed his meditation and where he slept. From the time of Gopal Guru, Mahaprabhu's wooden shoes and a quilt which was made either by Svarupa Damodar Goswami or Jagadananda Pandit are kept and worshiped in the Gambhira. There is also a waterpot made of clay from the Vraja area which was formerly used by Mahaprabhu. There is also a wooden waterpot which was put there in later times.

From Bhakti-ratnakara we learn that Narottama Das Thakur met Gopal Guru when he visited Puri.

Narottama visited the house of Kashi Mishra where he met Gopal Guru... Gopal Guru became emotional and embraced Narottama Das. (Bhakti-ratnakara 8.382, 389)

## **Miraculous events at Gopal Guru's death**

A few legends of miraculous events are told about Gopal Guru. When he started to grow old, he turned the responsibility for the Radhakanta Math over to his disciple Dhyana-chandra. When Gopal Guru died not long after, his successor was overcome with grief. He took his guru's body to the Svarga-dvara ("The gate to heaven") on the seafront. In the meantime, some representatives of a government department blocked off the temple, claiming that the transferal had been done without ministerial sanction. When Dhyana-chandra heard that this was going on,

he fell at the lotus feet of his guru's body, tears flowing from his eyes. Though Gopal Guru's body was on the funeral pyre, the prayers of his dear disciple reached him and he was resuscitated, chanting the Holy Names in sankirtan.

As soon as the government representatives heard of this event, they became fearful and abandoned their effort to take over the temple. Gopal Guru returned to the temple and made a properly legal transfer of ownership to his disciple and disappeared some time later on the Karttik Sukla Navami.

A year after Gopal Guru disappeared, when some devotees who had made the trip to Puri for the Rathayatra returned to Vraja, they were amazed to see Gopal Guru sitting chanting japa under a Pakura tree in Vamsi-bata. They sent the message to Dhyana-candra in Puri and he immediately hurried to Vrindavan to see his guru. He fell down at his feet and begged to be allowed to stay in Vraja, even though Gopal Guru told him to go back to Puri and take care of his responsibilities. Finally Gopal told Dhyana-candra, "If you feel such separation from me that you are unable to tolerate it, then have an image of me made out of a neem tree and place it in front of the altar room of the temple and worship it." This is what was done and the statue of Gopal Guru Goswami is worshiped at the Radhakanta Math to this day.

## **Gopal Guru Goswami's sucaka kirtan**

The following kirtan is sung on Gopal Guru's disappearance day.

are mora gopala guru      bhakati kalapa taru

makaradhvaja nama janhara |

sri kṛṣṇa caitanya janke      gopala baliye dake

dekhi sisu caritra udara ||1

gaurāṅgera seva-rase      sadai anande bhase

gora binu nahi jane an  
tileka na dekhi janre dhairaja dharite nare  
gora jena goplera pran ||2  
gopala sisura prati siksa dila eka riti  
prabhu premavese dhuli dhuli  
kahe sabe are are aji haite gopalere  
dakiba gopala guru bali ||3  
gopale karuna dekhi sabara sajala ankhi  
sukhera samudra uchalila  
sabe kahe anupama sri gopala guru nama  
prabhu datta jagate vyapila ||4  
goplera guru-bhakti kahite nahika sakti  
sadai prasanna vakresvara  
mahamatta nija-gite nahika upama dite  
sarva cittakarṣa kalevara ||5  
dekhila sakala ṭhaṇi emana dayalu nai  
keba na jagate yasa ghoṣe  
sabe kaila prema-patra ha+ila vancita matra  
narahari nija karma doṣe ||6

1. O Gopal Guru, you are my devotional desire tree. Your name was previously

Makaradhvaja, but Sri Krishna Chaitanya called you Gopal because your behavior as a child reminded him of Gopal Krishna.

2. You were always absorbed in the joy of serving Gauranga; indeed you knew nothing other than him. You could not tolerate being separated from the Lord for even a moment; it was as if Gopa was Gopal's very life.

3. One day, Gopal taught some devotional practices to a child. The Lord was so ecstatic that he said to everyone, from today on, I will call Gopal, "guru".

4. Tears filled the devotees' eyes when they saw how merciful the Lord was to Gopal; it was as though the ocean of joy was overflowing. Everyone said that the name Gopal Guru was extraordinary, and as it was given by the Lord, it soon spread throughout the world.

5. I am incapable of describing Gopal's devotion to his guru, Vakresvara, who was always satisfied with him. No one can compare to Gopal Guru who was always intoxicated in singing his own devotional songs and whose appearance was attractive to everyone.

6. Everyone recognized that there was no one as merciful as he. Who in the world did not sing his glories? He made everyone worthy of loving ecstasy, only I, Narahari, have been deprived because of my own misdeeds.

## **Srinivas Acharya**

### **Srinivas's birth**

Srinivas Acharya was born in 1530 AD, on the full moon day of the month of Vaishakh, in the village of Cakhandi, which lies just north of Agradvipa in the district of Nadiya. His father, Gangadhara Bhattacharya, was a Brahmin of the

Rarha class. The Bhakti-ratnakara describes the event as follows:

When Mahaprabhu took sannyas in Katwa, Gangadhara was overcome with grief and began to cry constantly while calling out the names “Ha Chaitanya! Ha Chaitanya!” When other devotees saw him intoxicated in divine love for Mahaprabhu, they nicknamed him Chaitanya Das, a name which stuck with him for the rest of his life.

Chaitanya Das had no desire for the things of this world, but one day he suddenly felt a strong wish to have a son and told this to his wife, Lakshmipriya. She responded by telling him to immediately go to Puri to ask Mahaprabhu for his blessings. The couple left for Puri, stopping for a few days at the house of Balaram Vipra, Lakshmipriya’s father, in Jajigrama. When they arrived in Puri, Chaitanya Das and his wife paid their obeisances to Mahaprabhu, but before they could speak, the Lord himself said, understanding their desire, “Jagannath Deva will surely fulfill all your desires.”

The other devotees were curious about what desire Mahaprabhu was talking about and they asked his servant Govinda. But before he could say anything, Mahaprabhu called Govinda and gave him the answer: “Chaitanya Das desires to have a son. Indeed his wife will give birth to a jewel of a son, who will be named Srinivas. He will be the manifest form of my love and will be non-different from me. He will increase everyone’s enthusiasm for devotion. Through Rupa and others I will bring scriptures into the world, and through Srinivas, I shall distribute them.”

At that time, the Lord called Govinda and said in a deep voice, from a trance state, “The Brahmin has come here, desiring a son. He will soon have one, whom he will name Srinivas. I will bring scriptures into the world through Sri Rupa and others and these jewel-like books will be distributed by Srinivas. Srinivas is the embodiment of pure love for me. All minds will be enthused upon seeing him.” (Bhakti-ratnakara 2.120-3)

Once they had received Mahaprabhu’s blessing, Chaitanya Das and his wife returned to his home and when the auspicious moment came, a son was born to them. Chaitanya Das immediately offered the child to Mahaprabhu.

The child went through the usual rituals of the first feeding of solid food,



name-giving, hair-cutting, etc. All the local associates of Mahaprabhu, such as Govinda Ghosh and the residents of Srikhaṇḍa, Narahari and Raghunandan, poured down affectionate blessings on the child.

## **Early education and travels**

Srinivas Acharya was devoted to his parents. He was fortunate to hear both Mahaprabhu's divine glories as well as Radha and Krishna's Vrindavan pastimes from his father. The two of them would go into an ecstatic state as they discussed these transcendental topics. Srinivas's mother trained him in kirtan.

He studied grammar, literature and poetic theory from Dhananjaya Vidyavacaspati, and quickly acquired mastery of these subjects. Not long afterward, Srinivas's father died. The loss of his devotee father's association greatly affected Srinivas, but the other devotees made a concerted effort to console him and his mother in their grief.

Srinivas took his mother and moved from Cakhandi to his maternal grandfather's house in Jajigrama, where the villagers were overjoyed to see him. Shortly thereafter, he went to visit Narahari Sarkara in nearby Srikhaṇḍa. From Narahari he learned that Mahaprabhu would shortly be ending his earthly pastimes. This news made Srinivas determined to see the Lord before it happened. He quickly returned to Jajigrama and took permission from his mother to make the trip to Puri. He then joined the devotees on the annual pilgrimage. It was the fifth day of the waxing moon.

Before arriving in Puri, however, the news arrived that Mahaprabhu had indeed ended his lila. Srinivas Acharya fainted at the news, and when he came back to consciousness, he decided to commit suicide. However, the Lord himself appeared to him in a dream and told him to complete his journey to Puri. Once in Puri, he again had a dream in which he saw Jagannath, Subhadra and Balaram, as well as Chaitanya Mahaprabhu with his associates. The incarnation of Mahaprabhu's pleasure potency, Srila Gadadhara Pandit Goswami met him and both of them were immersed in an ocean of ecstasy. Srinivas also met Raya Ramananda, Paramananda Puri, Sikhi Mahiti, Sarvabhauma Pandit, Vakresvara

Pandit, Govinda, Saṅkara Pandit, Gopinath Acharya and received blessings from them all.

Srinivas Acharya stayed for some time in Puri, hearing Srimad Bhagavatam from Gadadhara Pandit Goswami. Gadadhara then told him to return to Gauḍa. When Srinivas returned, he heard that Advaita Acharya and Nityananda Prabhu had also disappeared. Once again he determined to end his life, but the two Prabhus appeared to him in a dream to assuage his grief and had him give up his intention.

When he arrived in Nabadwip, Srinivas was once again plunged into a morass of sorrow at the loss of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. Vāṁsivadanananda Thakur saw him in this condition and approached Vishnupriya Devi and asked her to grant an audience to Srinivas and bless him. Srinivas Acharya was amazed to see the intense renunciation and deep faith of Mahaprabhu's widow. While in Nabadwip, he had a dream of Sachi Devi and received blessings from her, too. Srinivas then wandered throughout Bengal, going to all the Sripaṭas of the associates of Mahaprabhu and Nityananda Prabhu, seeking their blessings. He visited Shantipur, Khardaha, Khanakula Krishnanagara, Srikhaṇḍa, etc., and met Murari Gupta, Srivasa Pandit, Damodar Pandit, Shuklambar Brahmachari, Gadadhara Das, Paramesvari Das, Jahnava Devi, Vasudha Devi, Virabhadra, Abhiram Thakur, Narahari Sarakara Thakur, Raghunandan Thakur. All these great personalities witnesses Srinivas's intense devotion and told him to go to Vrindavan. Srinivas then went to his mother and asked her repeatedly for permission to make the trip which she could not refuse when she saw his great eagerness.

### **Srinivas arrived in Vraja**

Srinivas then travelled through Agradvipa, Katwa, Mauresvara, Ekacakra to Kashi, Ayodhya, and Prayag. He spent a long time travelling and visiting all these holy places before finally arriving in Vraja. There he heard that Rupa Goswami, Sanatan Goswami, Kashisvara Pandit and Raghunath Bhatta Goswami had all disappeared. Raghunath Das Goswami, Gopal Bhatta Goswami and Jiva Goswami were still living, however. Srinivas met all three of them and

received their blessings. He was initiated by Gopal Bhatta and took instruction in the Vaishnava scriptures from Jiva. In great affection for Srinivas, Jiva commended him to his deities, Radha Damodar. Srinivas met Raghunath Das and Krishna Das Kaviraj in Radha Kund and received their blessings. One day sri Jiva heard Srinivas explain a verse from Ujjvala-nilamaṇi and was so impressed by his erudition that he bestowed the title “Acharya” upon him. Jiva also gave the titles “Thakur” to Narottama and “Shyamananda” to Duḥkhi Krishna Das. Jiva ordered Srinivas to tour the sites of pilgrimage in the Vraja area with Raghava Goswami.

### **The return to Bengal**

After Srinivas had attained mastery of the Gaudiya Vaishnava scriptures, Sri Jiva and the other Vaishnavas in Vraja ordered him, Narottama and Shyamananda to take manuscripts of these invaluable books back to Bengal in an ox-cart. They set off on the Sukla Pancami of Agrahayan month. It was a long and dangerous trip, but they were able to cover the greater part of the distance without any trouble. Upon arriving in the Hindu kingdom of Bana Vishnupura, they felt that the danger was over. However, the rumor had reached the capital of Vishnupura that a rich merchant was travelling to Puri with a valuable cargo of merchandise. The ruler of the kingdom led a gang of highwaymen and when he heard that a cargo of great value was passing through his territory, he asked an astrologer to divine the truth of the rumors. The astrologer confirmed that this was indeed a cargo of great value. The king immediately sent a group of robbers to steal it, specifying that they should kill no one. The robbers first worshiped the goddess Caṇḍi, then sent out a spy who returned to tell them that everyone in the group accompanying the oxcart was sleeping in exhaustion after eating their night meal. The robbers thought that this was surely Caṇḍi’s mercy that a golden opportunity like this had come their way. They seized the oxcart and the books, thinking that they were gold and jewels, and turned them over to the king.

When Vishnupura’s king saw the large chest, he was delighted at the prospect of finding large amounts of valuables inside. How disappointed he must have been to see nothing but books inside! He turned to the astrologer and asked him how he could have made such a mistake. The astrologer answered, “I can’t

understand it. Every time I made my calculations I came up with the same conclusion: this chest is full of priceless jewels! It is incredible, I don't know why my calculations have gone wrong!"

The mere sight of the holy books had a purifying effect on the king, however, and he regretted having stolen them. Indeed, he desired to meet with the acharya of the books. That night he had a dream in which the Granthacharya appeared to him and this pacified him somewhat.

The next morning, Srinivas, Narottama and Shyamananda awoke to find the chest of books missing. They searched everywhere, but when they failed to find any clue of the books' whereabouts, they felt so depressed that they considered killing themselves. Some local villagers saw the distressed condition of the three Vaishnavas and immediately suspected the robber king, Vira Hambira. Srinivas made some further investigations and was assured that he would be able to find more information from the king himself. The three Vaishnavas felt some hope and abandoned their suicidal intentions. Srinivas Acharya decided to remain in Vishnupura in the hope of finding the books, but he sent Narottama to Kheturi and Shyamananda to Orissa.

### **The conversion of Vira Hambira**

While staying in Vishnupura, Srinivas heard from a Brahmin named Krishnavallabha that Vira Hambira liked to listen to Srimad Bhagavatam and daily attended classes. On the next day, Srinivas went with this Brahmin to the hall where the Bhagavat classes were held. The Brahmin introduced Srinivas to the king as a great Vaishnava, and the king indeed observed the characteristics of a great person in him and was attracted to him. The King expressed a desire to hear Srinivas speak on the Bhagavat and Srinivas agreed, thinking that this might be a good opportunity to recover the books. So he started to give lectures on the Bhagavat on a daily basis. The King was enchanted by Srinivas's unprecedented explanations of the Bhagavat in his sweet voice. Srinivas Acharya primarily preached Mahaprabhu's dharma through speaking on the Bhagavat and kirtan, while Narottama and Shyamananda primarily used the medium of kirtan. The style of kirtan that these three acharyas used were named

manohara-sahi, garaṇahaṭi, and reṇeṭi.

Vira Hambira arranged for a secluded dwelling to be given to Srinivas Acharya. One day, when he had the opportunity to find the king alone in his apartments, Srinivas recounted the entire story of the journey from Vraja and the theft of the manuscripts. The King immediately confessed, showing great sorrow for his misdeed, and had the chest of books returned to its owner. In great relief, Srinivas immediately sent messengers to Vrindavan, to Narottama and Shyamananda with the good news. In the course of time, Vira Hambira and his entire entourage all took initiation from Srinivas and dedicated their entire lives and wealth to him. Vira Hambira's initiated name was Chaitanya Das.

### **Srinivas's marriage**

After staying in Vana Vishnupura for some time, Srinivas Acharya returned to his maternal grandfather's house in Jajigrama. Then he set off on another tour of Katwa, Nabadwip and other important towns in Bengal. Srinivas respected Narahari Sarakara of Srikhaṇḍa greatly and was also very devoted to his saintly mother. When Narahari heard Srinivas's mother express her desire to see her son married, he gave him the order to do so. Even prior to receiving this order, Srinivas had received the same command from Advaita Acharya in a dream. Though he felt somewhat ashamed, he realized that he could not ignore the wishes of Narahari, his mother and Advaita Prabhu. He thus agreed to get married and was wed to Isvari, the devoted daughter of Gopal Chakravarti of Jajigrama.

It is not always easy to understand the divine activities of Mahaprabhu's devotees. Only someone who is totally surrendered to the Lord and his devotees can have access to their glories.

### **Srinivas's preaching activities**

Srinivas Acharya started to teach the Goswamis' books to his disciples in Jajigrama. One of his most important disciples was Ramachandra Kaviraj, the son of Srikhaṇḍa resident Cirañjiva Sena. Srinivas gave Ramachandra the title kaviraja after hearing his poems. Narottama Thakur had a close friendship with Ramachandra Kaviraj and even wrote about it in one of his songs:

Please be merciful, Prabhu Srinivas Acharya! Narottama Das begs for the association of Ramachandra.

When Shuklambar Brahmachari, Gadadhara Das, Narahari Sarkara and Dvija Hari Das all ended their earthly activities, Srinivas Acharya once again felt overcome by grief and made another trip to Vrindavan. Once again he met with Gopal Bhatta and Sri Jiva Goswamis, as well as with Bhugarbha and Lokanatha Goswamis, and these great devotees spoke to him encouragingly, reducing his feelings of loss. Ramachandra Kaviraj and Shyamananda Prabhu also joined Srinivas in Vraja on this occasion.

When he returned to Gauḍa, Srinivas joined in the festivities occasioning the anniversaries of the departure of Gadadhara Das in Katwa, Narahari in Srikhaṇḍa and Dvija Hari Das in Kancanagaṛiya. From there he went to Budhari village, where Ramachandra Kaviraj and Govinda Kaviraj hosted him with great opulence.

Narottama Das Thakur had also left Vrindavan on Lokanatha Goswami's orders, returning to his home in Kheṭuri. On the full moon day of Phalgunā, he established the worship of six sets of deities in the temple there: Gaurāṅga, Vallabhikānta, Vrajamohana, Sri Krishna, Radhakānta, and Radharamaṇa. Srinivas Acharya performed the installation ceremony and the first puja.

Jahnava Devi was also present at this great event. After the festival, she went on to Vraja with her entourage. Upon her return, she met with Srinivas Acharya at Katwa and then went with him to spend some time in Jajigrama.

Srinivas Acharya made another trip to Nabadwip with Narottama and Ramachandra Kaviraj, performing the parikrama of the nine islands, each of which represents one of the limbs of devotional service.

When Raghunandan Thakur entered the nitya-lila, Srinivas Acharya went to Srikhaṇḍa to help conduct the funeral festival in his honor. He returned with a heavy heart to Jajigrama, and from there went to see his disciples in Vana

Vishnupura. He was received by the excited King and the other residents of the town. There, he received an order from Mahaprabhu himself in a dream to accept the hand of Gaurangapriya, the daughter of a certain Raghava Chakravarti. Raghava and his wife Madhavi had been searching for a suitable husband for their daughter with no success. They also received the order in a dream to give their daughter in marriage to Srinivas. As a result, Srinivas married for a second time.

The pure devotee has no other objective in life than to fulfill the desires of the Supreme Lord. They are thus ready to do anything if it pleases the Lord. None of their activities has the slightest hint of material desire in it. Srinivas Acharya is the avesa incarnation of Mahaprabhu himself and his transcendental activities can only be described by someone who has received his special blessings.

## **Srila Narottama Das Thakur**

akumara-brahmacari sarva-tirtha-darsi

parama-bhagavatottamahṁ srila-narottama-dasa ||

A brahmachari for his entire life, Narottama Das visited all the places of pilgrimage. He was on the highest platform of devotional achievement. (Bhakti-ratnakara 1.256)

Narottama Thakur was Campaka Manjari in Krishna-lila. Eternally assisting Rupa Manjari in her service to Radha and Krishna, Campaka Manjari had mercy on the conditioned souls of this earth and appeared as Narottama in the village of Kheturi, about twelve miles from Rampur Bowaliya in the Gopalpur subdivision of Rajshahi district. This took place on the full moon day of the month of Magh sometime around the middle of the 15th century of the Saka era.

Narottama was born on the Maghi Purnima. From that day on he thrived and grew like the waxing moon. (Bhakti-ratnakara 1.281)

Narottama's father was Raja Kṛṣṇananda Datta, the zamindar of the Gopalpur area. His mother's name was Narayaṇi Devi. Raja Kṛṣṇananda had a younger brother named Purushottam Datta, who had a son named Santoṣa. In order to show that his associates can take birth in any caste, Krishna had Narottama take birth in a kayastha family.

From his early childhood, Narottama began to display symptoms of his future greatness. Everyone was amazed to see his great intelligence and his devotional demeanor. He was constantly absorbed in meditation on the wonderful qualities of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and Nityananda Prabhu. The Lord and his associates appeared to him in his dreams.

As tears poured from his eyes, Narottama would offer prayers of surrender to Sri Krishna Chaitanya, Nityananda, Advaita and the other associates of the Lord. Finally, the Lord and his associates appeared to him in a dream and consoled him with kind words. (Bhakti-ratnakara 1.285-6)

### **Mahaprabhu leaves prema behind for Narottama**

According to the Premavilasa, when Mahaprabhu passed through Kanair Naṭasala, as he was dancing ecstatically in kirtan, he began to call out the name Narottama. When Nityananda asked him why he was calling out this name, Mahaprabhu answered, "My Lord. You do not know your own glories. When we went to Jagannath Puri, you shed tears out of divine love, day after day. I managed to capture your divine love and save it. Now I wish to keep it here by the Padmavati River for Narottama Das."

Mahaprabhu then went on to the Padmavati River to the place known as Kutubpur, where he bathed and sang and danced in ecstasy. He then called out to the river, "O Padmavati! Take my love and keep it here. When Narottama comes and bathes here, give it to him."



The Padmavati inquired, “How will I recognize him?”

Mahaprabhu answered, “You will know it is Narottama, for when he enters your waters, you will overflow.”

The place where Mahaprabhu placed prema for Narottama’s sake was later given the name Prematali. When Narottama was twelve years old, he had a dream in which Nityananda Prabhu told him to bathe in the Padmavati and take the prema which had been stored there for him. He went the next day to the Padma and as soon as he put his foot in the water, the river started to overflow. The Padmavati then remembered Mahaprabhu’s words and gave Narottama the prema which she had been safeguarding for him.

### **Narottama leaves home**

As soon as he experienced the ecstasies of prema, Narottama’s character, his appearance, everything about him changed. His parents noticed the transformation and did everything they could to bring him back to his normal state, but failed. Having drunk the wine of divine ecstasy, Narottama had become intoxicated and the bonds of family life could no longer hold him back.

Narottama began to wonder how he could escape from his material entanglements. Finally, one day when his father and uncle were away on official business, he practiced some deception on his mother and tricked his bodyguards so that he could leave his family for Vrindavan. It was the full-moon day of Karttik when this event took place.

According to others, Narottama waited to go to Vrindavan until after the death of his father when his cousin Santoṣa was given the responsibility for the zamindari. Even though he was the son of a rich zamindar, in his desire to unite with the Lord, he was ready to abandon the pleasures of the body in a moment. Day and night, he cried, walking barefoot, forgetting to eat and to drink until finally he would fall unconscious under a tree. One golden-skinned Brahmin came and offered him a cup of milk and said to him in a sweet voice, “O Narottama, drink this milk. Your cuts and bruises will go away. Take it easy.”

After saying this, the Brahmin vanished and the exhausted Narottama finally fell asleep. That night, he dreamt of Rupa and Sanatan Goswami. The two Goswamis placed their hands on his chest and fed him the milk that Mahaprabhu himself had brought him. All of Narottama's fatigue disappeared.

### **Narottama is initiated by Lokanatha Goswami**

The Prema-vilasa also describes how Narottama took initiation from Lokanatha Goswami. Narottama was born on Maghi puṇima, his renunciation took place on the Karttik puṇima, and he was initiated by Lokanatha on the Shravan puṇima.

Lokanatha Goswami is considered to be a personal associate of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. Indeed, he was the first Gaudiya Vaishnava to be instructed by the Lord to go to Vrindavan, along with Bhugarbha Goswami. Lokanatha set the standard for worship in a spirit of renunciation while in the dham. He was a viviktanandi Vaishnava, i.e., he took pleasure in worshipping the Lord in solitude. In this spirit, he had vowed not to take any disciples. Narottama Das too made a vow -- to take initiation from no one other than Lokanatha. Though he was the son of a raja, Narottama's desire to receive Lokanatha's mercy was so great that he went in the middle of every night to clean the place he used as a toilet. He would also leave fine earth and water for him to clean himself afterward. This is described as follows in the Prema-vilasa:

He went to the place where the Goswami performed his bodily functions and did a special job of cleaning it. He sifted the earth to make fine, clean earth with which Lokanatha could clean his hands. He did this as a regular service. He would hide the broom of coconut leaves in the earth and each night take them out to sweep the place, his heart filled with joy. He considered himself fortunate and his body worthwhile. He would hold the broom to his chest, repeating, "This is the power that will help me attain my lord's lotus feet." As he said these words, he cried and torrents of tears washed over his chest.

Lokanatha was astonished to see that the place was daily being kept clean. He became curious to find out who it was and so, one evening, he went and hid in

the jungle, chanting japa the entire night in wait for the anonymous benefactor. At midnight, he saw someone engaged in cleaning the place and asked him who he was. When he found out that Narottama, the son of a raja, was doing such a filthy task, he felt embarrassed and told him to desist. Narottama, however, immediately fell at Lokanatha's feet began to cry. When Lokanatha saw Narottama's humility and pain, his resolve softened and gave him initiation. Thus Narottama gave an outstanding example to the world of how one should behave in the service of one's spiritual master.

At that moment, Narottama went there and with great enthusiasm, engaged in the necessary service to his guru. Lokanatha was pleased with his service and initiated him in the mantra, demonstrating the greatest mercy on Narottama. (Bhakti-ratnakara 1.345-6)

Without caring for his youth or his physical beauty, he left home on the full moon day of the month of Karttik. After wandering through many pilgrimage places, he finally came to Vrindavan where he became Lokanatha Goswami's disciple. On the auspicious day of Sravanī purnīma, Lokanatha initiated Narottama.

Thus Narottama Das was Lokanatha's one and only disciple. The founder of the world-wide Gaudiya Maths and the flagship monastery in Mayapur, the Chaitanya Math, Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur, similarly demonstrated a determination and patience in service to his spiritual master in order to convince him to accept him as a disciple. Gaura Kisora Das Babaji, like Lokanatha, had vowed to take no disciples. He refused Srila Prabhupada three times, but this did not break Prabhupada's will. When Gaura Kisora saw his humility and intense desire, he finally relented and gave him mantra diksha. Srila Prabhupada was Gaura Kisora Das's only disciple.

After the disappearance of Rupa and Sanatan Goswamis, Sri Jiva Goswami became the undisputed intellectual leader of all Gaudiya Vaishnavas throughout Mathura, Bengal and Orissa and the chief-minister of the universal court of Vaishnavas at Vrindavan -- the Visva-vaiṣṇava-raja-sabha. Srinivas Acharya, Narottama Das, and Duḥkhi Krishna Das all studied the scriptures under Jiva, receiving detailed personal instruction from him. When their studies were completed, Jiva gave them the titles of Acharya, Thakur and Shyamananda, respectively.

## Narottama returns to Bengal

After their studies were complete, Jiva sent his three students to Bengal with the Vaishnava scriptures. Sri Jiva heard the news that the books had been stolen in Bana Vishnupura and then later that they had been recovered. This story has been told in this book on pages 165 to 166 in the chapter on Srinivas.

Lokanatha Goswami considered Narottama's previous life as a wealthy zamindar to be particularly suitable for preaching in his home area of northern Bengal and thought that with his status he would be able to teach the standards of renounced devotional behavior. Out of compassion for that country's people, he ordered Narottama to return to his home town of Kheturi. Srinivas was aware of Lokanatha's intention, so when the books were stolen, he told Narottama to continue on his way to Kheturi. Srinivas Acharya said, "Go quickly to Kheturi and carry out Lokanatha's orders." (Bhakti-ratnakara 7.119)

Anchorite devotees (viviktanandis), being absorbed in the intimate service of the Lord on the transcendental platform, normally have no taste for engaging in any welfare activity which brings only temporary succor to materialistic persons, bound by Maya and absorbed in their bodily identification. Materialistic welfare activities are considered to be of great value only when there is a misunderstanding about the real goal of life--service to Krishna. Lokanatha taught the world through his disciple, on the principle that "a housewife teaches the daughter-in-law by instructing the daughter." Though Narottama himself was distraught with separation from his spiritual master, he nevertheless took his order seriously and returned to Kheturi where he began preaching the doctrines of pure devotional service to the people of northern Bengal. Narottama revealed his emotional state somewhat in his Prarthana,

aneka duḥkhera pare, layechile vraja-pure

kr̥pa-ḍora galaya bandhiya |

daiva-maya balatkare, khasaiya sei ðore

bhavakupe dileka ðariya ||

punaḥ yadi kṛpa kari, e janare kese dhari

ṭaniya tulaha vraja-dhame |

tabe se dekhiye bhala, natuba paraṇa gela

kahe dina dasa narottame ||

After a great deal of suffering, you finally dragged me to Vraja-dham, tying the rope of mercy around my neck. But now, the forces of fate and illusion have loosened that rope and thrown me back down the well of material existence.

If you would only be merciful to me and grab me by the hair, pulling me back into Vraja-dham. Then everything will seem right once more, otherwise, Narottama says, his life is over.

On Lokanatha Goswami's orders, Narottama installed six sets of deities in his temple in Kheturi: Gauranga, Vallabhikanta, Vrajamohana, Sri Krishna, Radhakanta, and Radharamaṇa. The great festival which he held on that occasion is still remembered in the Vaishnava world.

Narottama arrived in Gauḍa-desa. He had been ordered by Lokanatha to establish the deity service of both Gauranga and Krishna, to serve the Vaishnavas and to preach the congregational chanting of the Holy Names. He immediately dedicated himself to carrying out these orders. First he set about establishing the service of six sets of beautiful deities, whose names, taken together, bring joy to the heart of the devotees:

gauraṅga vallabhi-kanta sri-kṛṣṇa vraja-mohana |

radha-ramaṇa he radhe radha-kanta namo'stu te || (Bhakti-ratnakara 1.422-6)

## **The great festival at Kheturi**

Prior to the Kheturi-mahotsava, Narottama Das Thakur travelled throughout Bengal and Orissa, visiting various places where Mahaprabhu had performed his pastimes, meeting the Lord's associates and receiving their blessings. Amongst the places he visited were Uddharan Datta's home in Saptagram; Khardaha, where he met Paramesvari Das, and Nityananda's saktis, Jahnava and Vasudha; Khanakula Krishnanagara, the home of Abhiram Thakur; Shyamananda's home in Nrisinghapura; the Sripaṭas of Narahari and Raghunandan in Srikhaṇḍa; and the birthplace of Nityananda Prabhu in Ekacakra-dham; Gopinath Acharya's home, Hari Das Thakur's samadhi tomb, Gadadhara Pandit's place of worship, the Jagannath temple and Gundicha, the Jagannath-vallabha gardens, Narendra-sarovara, etc. in Jagannath Puri.

Most of the living associates of Mahaprabhu and other leaders of the sampradaya came to Kheturi on the occasion of the festival organized by Narottama Das. A list of these has been given by Narahari Chakravarti in his books, Bhakti-ratnakara and Narottama-vilasa: Shyamananda Prabhu, Jahnava Devi, Paramesvari Das, Krishna Das Sarkhela (Jahnava's uncle), Madhava Acharya (Nityananda's son-in-law), Raghupati Vaidya, Minaketan Rama Das, Murari Chaitanya Das, JnanaDas, Mahidhara, Sri Saṅkara, Kamalakara Pippalai, Gauranga Das, Nakari, Krishna Das, Damodar, Balaram Das, Sri Mukunda, Vrindavan Das Thakur; Raghunandan Thakur and other devotees from Srikhaṇḍa; Sripati and Srinidhi (Srivasa's brothers) came from Nabadwip; Advaita's sons, Achyutananda, Gopal Mishra and Krishna Mishra came from Shantipur; Hriday Chaitanya and other devotees from Ambika Kalna, etc.

Srinivas Acharya acted as the officiating priest at the festival and performed the rituals installing the deities. In the kirtan led by Narottama which followed, Mahaprabhu and his associates themselves appeared.

Who can describe the joy of that kirtan? Mahaprabhu himself and his associates all became incarnate just like lightning in a conglomeration of rainclouds. (Bhakti-ratnakara 10.571-2)

The kirtan was amazing: you could see Nityananda Prabhu and Advaita Acharya overcome with ecstasy and Gauranga, encircled by the devotees. What

wonderful compassion the Lord displayed on that day! Who can understand these wonderful pastimes? What blessings he poured on Narottama and Srinivas, for they and their companions found the fulfilment of all their desires. (Bhakti-ratnakara 10.605-7)

After the Kheturi festival, Narottama's fame spread throughout the Vaishnava world. Prominent Brahmins like Ramakṛṣṇa Acharya and Ganga-Narayan Chakravarti became his disciples.

### **Narottama's preaching adventures**

Narahari Chakravarti has described Narottama's activities extensively in his Narottama-vilasa. One can understand his outstanding feats by reading this book.

In Gopalpura village, there was a Brahmin named Vipra Das. He had a poisonous snake living in his wicker grain-storage bin (gola). When Narottama visited Vipra Das's house, the snake vanished, and in its place appeared deities of Gaura and Vishnupriya.

Gaurasundara and his beloved Vishnupriya came out of the gola and climbed into Narottama's lap in plain view of everyone. (Bhakti-ratnakara 10.202)

Everyone was quite amazed. These same deities are today being served in Gambhila.

A certain smarta Brahmin scholar blasphemed Narottama, calling him a sudra. As a result he was attacked by leprosy. He later had a vision of the Goddess in a dream. He went and fell at Narottama Das's feet and begged him for forgiveness, as she had told him to, and was thus freed from the terrible disease.

Harirama and Ramakṛṣṇa, the sons of Shivananda Acharya, were taking a goat and a buffalo to be offered as a sacrifice to the Goddess on the order of their

father. They met Narottama and Ramachandra Kaviraj on the way and were attracted by their effulgent beauty. Narottama Thakur advised the two young Brahmins to abandon worship in the modes of passion and ignorance which entailed violence to animals and to worship the Supreme Lord without any desire. The brothers immediately let the goat and buffalo go and bathed in the Padma. They then took initiation from Narottama and dedicated their lives to the service of Lord Krishna and his devotees.

When Shivananda Acharya heard about this, he became angry and called a Smarta scholar from Mithila named Murari to come and defeat Narottama's Vaishnava philosophy. However, Harirama and Ramakṛṣṇa were given divine blessings by their guru and were able to defeat every one of the Smarta's arguments with scriptural evidence. Defeated, Shivananda Acharya went to pray to the Goddess. She appeared to him that night in a dream and rebuked him for his enmity to the Vaishnavas and told him to cease all such behavior.

In the course of time, Ganga Narayan Chakravarti, Jagannath Acharya and other well-known Brahmins started to become Narottama's disciples. This caused a stir in the Smarta community and they went to complain to Raja Narasimha: "Narottama is a sudra who makes disciples of Brahmins. He is using some kind of mystic powers or hypnotism to convert them. He should be stopped."

After discussions with Raja Narasimha, it was decided that a scholar named Rupa Narayan should be summoned to debate Narottama. This Brahmin had won numerous debates of this sort and was known as a digvijayi. The Raja himself set off with Rupa Narayan and a number of other Brahmins toward Kheturi. Ramachandra Kaviraj and Ganga Narayan Chakravarti were upset to see the wicked intentions of the Raja and his paṇḍita. When they heard that the Raja and his entourage were resting overnight in Kumarapura village, they went in disguise as a potter and a pan-seller and set up stalls in the village market. When the Brahmins came through the market, Ramachandra and Ganga Narayan spoke with them in Sanskrit. The Brahmins were astounded that even ordinary stall-keepers in the village were able to speak in Sanskrit. Ramachandra and Ganga Narayan began a debate with the Brahmins, defeating every Smarta argument that they put forward and establishing the pure doctrine of devotional service.

The Raja and his Digvijayi Pandit were rendered speechless by the



scholarship of the two ordinary stall-keepers. When they learned that the two men were disciples of Narottama Das, the Raja said to his paṇḍita, “If Narottama’s ordinary disciples can defeat you in debate, there is no need of going to see him.” But once again, the Goddess appeared to Narasimha and Rupa Narayan and ordered them to go to Narottama and pray for forgiveness for their offenses. The two of them did so and became devotees of Radha and Krishna.

## **Two songs by Narottama**

In the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava Abhidhana, the following comments are found: “Narottama’s asrama was in a place called Bhajanaṭuli, about two miles from his capital city, Kheturi. Narottama did his preaching through kirtan. He created the style of kirtan known as Garaṇahaṭi. He wrote two books, Prarthana and Prema-bhakti-candrika, which are like the very life of the devotees. He has written songs which are appropriate for every devotional mood, and this is what touches the devotees’ hearts. These two books are so popular that they have been published countless times. Narottama’s influence can be appreciated even in distant Maṇipura. Everyone agrees that the Vaishnava religion spread through Maṇipura through Narottama’s potency. His devotional songs are sung in every home throughout Maṇipura state.

Srinivas Acharya’s disciple Ramachandra Kaviraj was Narottama’s dearest companion. Narottama received news of Ramachandra’s disappearance first; not long afterward he heard of Srinivas’s disappearance, he wrote the following song in the mood of separation which is capable of melting even a stone-like heart.

je anila prema-dhana karuṇa pracura |

hena prabhu kotha gela acarya ṭhakura ||

kahaṇ mora Svarupa rupa, kahaṇ sanatana?

kahañ dasa raghunatha patita-pavana?  
kahañ mora bhaṭṭa-yuga, kahañ kaviraja?  
eka-kale kotha gela gora naṭaraja?  
paṣaṇe kuṭiba matha anale pasiba  
gauraṅga guṇera nidhi kotha gele paba ||  
se saba saṅgira saṅge je kaila vilasa  
se saṅga na pana kande narottama-dasa ||

Where has Acharya Thakur gone, he who out of great mercy brought the wealth of love as a gift to the world. Where are my Svarupa and Rupa, where is Sanatan? Where has Raghunath Das, the deliverer of the most fallen, gone? Where are Raghunath Bhatta and Gopal Bhatta? Where is Krishnadas Kaviraj? Where has the king of the dance, Gauranga, suddenly disappeared to? I will beat my head against the rocks or enter the flames--but where can I go to find that ocean of virtue, Gauranga? Narottama Das is crying because he is deprived of the association of all those companions of the Lord.

Narottama Das Thakur was the topmost of the followers of Rupa Goswami, Mahaprabhu's close associate. His devotion to Rupa Goswami can be recognized from the following song:

sri rupa manjari pada    sei mora sampada  
sei mora bhajana pujana  
sei mora praṇa-dhana    sei more abharaṇa  
sei mora jivanera jivana

sei mora rasa-nidhi    sei mora vancha-siddhi

sei mora vedera dharama

sei vrata, sei tapa    sei mora mantra japa

sei mora dharama karama

anukula habe vidhi    se pade haibe siddhi

nirakhiba ei dui nayane

se rupa madhuri-rasi    praṇa-kuvalaya-sasi

praphullita habe nisi-dine

tuwa adarsana ahi    garale jarala dehi

cira-dina tapita jivana

ha ha prabhu kara daya    deha more pada-chaya

narottama laila saraṇa

Rupa Manjari's feet are my wealth; they are my worship, they are my ritual.  
They are what keep me alive, they are my ornament, they are the life of my life.

They are my ocean of nectar, they are the perfection of my desire, they are my  
Vedic religion. They are my vow, they are my austerity, they are the mantra that I  
chant on my beads. They are my religious duty.

Fate will be kind to me, and I will find my perfection by attaining her feet and  
will be able to see with my own eyes the beauty of Radha and Krishna's form,  
the moon of the lily of my life.

The snake of your absence has burned up my body with its poison; I have suffered this pain for so long. O my lord, be merciful to me, give me the shade of your feet. Narottama has taken shelter.

### **Narottamaṣṭaka by Vishvanath Chakravarti**

sri-kṛṣṇa-namamṛta-varṣi-vaktra-  
candra-prabha-dhvasta-tamo-bharaya |  
gauraṅga-devanucaraya tasmai  
namo namaḥ srila-narottamaya ||1||

I offer my repeated obeisances to Srila Narottama Das Thakur, who destroys the darkness of ignorance with the nectarean rays of Krishna's holy name which emanate from his moon-like face; to him who is the glorious follower of the divine Gauranga.

saṅkirtananandaja-manda-hasya-  
danta-dyuti-dyotita-diṅ-mukhaya |  
svedasru-dhara-snapitaya tasmai  
namo namaḥ srila-narottamaya ||2||

I offer my repeated obeisances to Srila Narottama Das Thakur, who lights up every direction with the effulgence of his teeth, revealed as he laughs out of the joy of Harinama-sankirtan; to him who is bathed in torrents of tears and perspiration.

mṛdaṅga-nada-sruti-matra-cancat-

padambujamanda-manoharaya |

sadyaḥ samudyat-pulakaya tasmai

namo namaḥ srila-narottamaya ||3||

I offer my repeated obeisances to Srila Narottama Das Thakur, whose lotus feet dance enchantingly, being set into motion as soon as he hears the sound of the mridanga; whose body is covered with horripilation.

gandharva-garva-kṣapaṇa-svalasya-

vismapitaseṣa-kṛti-vrajaya |

sva-sṛṣṭa-gana-prathitaya tasmai

namo namaḥ srila-narottamaya ||4||

I offer my repeated obeisances to Srila Narottama Das Thakur, whose dance and song, indeed, every action in kirtan brings shame to the Gandharvas; whose fame has spread through the songs he has written.

ananda-murcchavanipat-bhata-

dhuli-bharalaṅkṛta-vigrahaya |

yad-darsanaṁ bhagya-bhareṇa tasmai

namo namaḥ srila-narottamaya ||5||

I offer my repeated obeisances to Srila Narottama Das Thakur, whose figure is decorated with the dust which covers it as he falls to the ground in an ecstatic faint; who can be seen only by one who has unlimited good fortune.

sthale sthale yasya kṛpa-prapabhiḥ

kṛṣṇanya-tṛṣṇa jana-saṁhatinam |

nirmulita eva bhavanti tasmai

namo namaḥ srila-narottamaya ||6||

I offer my repeated obeisances to Srila Narottama Das Thakur, who rains down mercy wherever he goes, causing every person's desires, other than those for service to Krishna, to be uprooted.

yad-bhakti-niṣṭha pala-rekhikeva  
sparsaḥ punaḥ sparsa-mañiva yasya |  
pramaṇyam evaṁ srutivad yadiyaṁ  
tasmai namaḥ srila-narottamaya ||7||

I offer my repeated obeisances to Srila Narottama Das Thakur, whose firm devotion is like a line scratched in a stone, whose touch is like that of the philosopher's stone and whose every word is as authoritative as that of the Veda.

murtaiva bhaktiḥ kim ayaṁ kim eṣa  
vairagya-saras tanuman nṛloke |  
sambhavyate yaḥ kṛtibhiḥ sadaiva  
tasmai namaḥ srila-narottamaya ||8||

I offer my repeated obeisances to Srila Narottama Das Thakur, who appears to some as devotion itself incarnate, or as the essence of renunciation in human form -- this is forever the opinion of the wise.

rajan-mṛdaṅga-karatala-kalabhiraṁ  
gauraṅga-gana-madhu-pana-bharabhiraṁ |  
sriman-narottama-padambuja-manju-nṛtyaṁ  
bhṛtyaṁ kṛtarthayatu maṁ phaliteṣṭa-kṛtyaṁ ||9||

May the dancing of Srila Narottama Das Thakur's lotus feet, which follows every beat of the drum and hand cymbals and which incarnates the beauty of his intoxication in the songs glorifying Gauranga bring fulfilment to me, his servant,

by bringing to fruition all his sacrifices.

Sri Jiva gave both Srinivas Acharya's disciple Ramachandra Sena and his brother Govinda the Kaviraj title.

## **Sri Shyamananda Prabhu**

Sri Shyamananda Prabhu was a servant of a servant of Subala in Krishna-lila. He was the disciple of Hṛdayananda or Hriday Chaitanya, who was a disciple of Gauri Das Pandit. Gauri Das was Subala in Krishna-lila.

yam loka bhuvi kirtayanti hṛdayanandasya siṣyam priyam

sakhye sri-subalasya yam bhagavataḥ preṣṭhanusiṣyam tatha|

sa sriman rasikendra-mastaka-maṇis citte mamaharnisam

sri-radhapriya-narma-marmasu rucim sampadayan bhasatam ||

Sri Shyamananda was known in this world as Hṛdayananda's dear disciple; he was the grand-disciple of Subala sakha, the most dear friend of the Supreme Lord; he was the crest-jewel of the enjoyers of sacred rapture. May he appear day and night in my mind, bringing an appreciation for the essence of the joys of the beloved of Sri Radha. (Syamananda-sat.aka)

Shyamananda Prabhu was born on the full moon day of Chaitra in 1456 of the Saka era (1534 AD) in the town of Dharendra Bahadurpura, which is near the Khaṛgapura railway station in Medinipura. His father was Sri Krishna Maṇḍal and his mother, Durika. Krishna Maṇḍal's home town was Daṇḍesvara which lies on the banks of the Suvarṇarekha River. The following statement is found in the Gauḍiya Vaiṣṇava Abhidhana: "Sri Krishna Maṇḍal used to live in a place called Ambuwa, near Daṇḍesvara. He formerly lived in Gauḍa (the part of Bengal which lies on the banks of the Bhagirathi River) and only later moved to

Daṇḍesvara, is just across the present-day border in Orissa. Shyamananda's disciples have established five principle seats in the towns of Dharenda, Bahadurapura, Rayāṇi, Gopiballabhapura, and Nrisinghapura.”

Shyamananda Prabhu was born in the Sadgopa subcaste, which fits in the category of jala-cala, i.e., Brahmins are permitted to take water touched by its members. Of course, a Vaishnava is beyond the material qualities and may take birth in a family of any race or caste. If anyone thinks badly of Vaishnavas or judges them on the basis of their race or caste is destined for hell.

arcye siladhir guruṣu naramatir vaiṣṇave jati-buddhir

viṣṇor va vaiṣṇavanam kali-mala-mathane padatirthe'mbubuddhiḥ|

sri viṣṇor namni mantre sakala-kaluṣahe sabda-samanya-buddhir

viṣṇau sarvesvarese tad-itara-samadhir yasya va naraki saḥ ||

Anyone who considers the deity to be nothing but stone,

the guru to be an ordinary human being,

or the Vaishnava to be a member of a particular caste or race,

who takes the holy water which has washed Vishnu or the Vaiṣṇava's feet and can destroy all the sins of the age of Kali, to be ordinary water,

who thinks that the name or mantra of Viṣṇu,

which destroys all evils, is the same as any other sound,

or who takes Vishnu to be equal to anything other than him,

has a hellish nature. (Padma-purāṇa)



One who takes birth in a low-class family is not disqualified from performing devotional service, nor is one who born in a pure, high-class brahmanical family automatically qualified for such service. Whoever engages in the worship of the Lord is a great person; one who does not worship is rejected. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 3.4.66-7)

na me bhaktas caturvedi mad-bhaktaḥ svapacaḥ priyaḥ |

tasmai deyaṁ tato grahyaṁ sa ca puḥyo yatha hy aham ||

Simply being a knower of the four Vedas does not make someone my devotee. An outcaste who is my devotee is dear to me. One should exchange gifts and food, etc., with such a devotee for he is verily as worshipable as I. (Quoted in Haribhaktivilasa.)

Prior to Shyamananda's birth, his parents had lost several children in childbirth and they vowed to surrender their next child to Vishnu if it survived. Having suffered so much grief in the loss of their previous children, they first named Shyamananda Duḥkhi, or "unhappy", to ward off further distress.

Shyamananda's parents Durika and Srikrṣṇa Maṇḍala made their home in Daṇḍesvara, his. His father was the best of the Sadgopa caste, of impeccable character. Krishna was everything to him and Krishna's devotees very dear. We cannot describe the virtues of his parents for fear of increasing the volume of this book. They had previously lived in Dharendra and Bahadurapura and some people say that Shyamananda's birth took place there. Nothing could stop his birth, for he came after many other children had been still-born to his parents. Because of their previous losses, his parents brought him up in sadness and so they called him Duḥkhi. (Bhakti-ratnakara 1.351-5, 359)

Shyamananda Prabhu's parents performed the appropriate rituals when the time came: the first eating of solid food, the cutting of hair, etc. As he grew older, he studied Sanskrit grammar, etc. His parents were overjoyed to see his talents and his religious proclivity. After having carefully listened to the glories of Gauranga

and Nityananda from devotees, he was able to repeat them to others. When listening to the activities of Gaura-Nitai or those of Radha and Krishna, tears would flow in waves from his eyes. He also devotedly served his parents and they told him to get initiated so that he could fully commit himself to the service of the Lord. Duḥkhi agreed and told them that he wished to take diksha from Hriday Chaitanya, the disciple of Nityananda and Gauranga's associate, Gauri Das Pandit. When going to Kalna for that purpose, he would also have the good fortune to see the Ganges and to bathe in it. His parents happily gave him permission to go there.

When Duḥkhi arrived in Ambika Kalna, he threw himself at the feet of Hriday Chaitanya, who upon learning his identity, happily gave him Krishna-mantra and named him Krishna Das. From then on Duḥkhi was known as Duḥkhi Krishna Das. Hriday Chaitanya ordered him to go to Vrindavan to engage in bhajana. Though he did not like being separated from his gurudeva, Duḥkhi Krishna Das set off for Vraja, first visiting Nabadwip and other places in Gauḍamaṇḍala where he sought the blessings of the Vaishnavas. Finally, after spending much time on pilgrimage, he finally arrived in Vrindavan where he became completely absorbed in the worship of Radha and Shyamasundar.

In Vrindavan, Duḥkhi Krishna Das studied the Vaishnava scriptures under Sri Jiva Goswami, who was the leading scholar of the sampradaya. When Hriday Chaitanya heard of the enthusiasm with which Duḥkhi Krishna Das was leading the devotional life in Vraja, he wrote a letter to Jiva Goswami in which he said that Duḥkhi should consider Jiva to be an extension of himself. Jiva gave titles to his three most prominent students, Srinivas, Narottama and Duḥkhi Krishna Das, bestowing Shyamananda on the latter. The reasoning behind this name was that he brought great joy to Radha and Shyamasundar.

While in Vrindavan, he was given the name Shyamananda because he brought great joy to Shyamasundar. When Jiva saw his charming activities, he kept him nearby and instructed him in the Vaishnava scriptures. (Bhakti-ratnakara 1.401-2)

Jiva Goswami sent Srinivas Acharya, Narottama Das Thakur and Shyamananda back to Bengal with the Vaishnava scriptures in 1504 of the Saka era (1582-3 AD). The idea was to spread the teachings found in these books throughout Bengal and Orissa. The events which took place when Vira Hambira had the books stolen in Vishnupura have been related in the chapter on Srinivas

Acharya.

Narottama went to northern Bengal and Shyamananda went to Orissa. Midnapore district was previously under the rule of the Orissan king. Today there is a branch Gaudiya Math in Midnapore city named the Shyamananda Gaudiya Math which is meant to preserve his holy memory.

### **Radharani's special mercy on Shyamananda**

Even though Shyamananda Prabhu was Hriday Chaitanya's initiated disciple, his guru had entrusted him to the care of Jiva Goswami Prabhu. Through the association of Jiva and service to him, Shyamananda developed a taste for serving Radha and Krishna in the conjugal mood. Hriday Chaitanya Prabhu himself was a disciple of Gauri Das Pandit, who was one of the twelve Gopals, Subala sakha. He worshiped Gaura-Nitai in the mood of friendship. Those who think that Shyamananda committed an offense to his initiating spiritual master by abandoning his mood and trying to directly serve Krishna in a higher mood, are wrong. The mood of friendship is contained within the conjugal mood. If a disciple makes further progress in spiritual life it enhances the reputation of his teacher. An extraordinary incident, which took place in Vrindavan prior to his being ordered by Jiva to return to Orissa, demonstrates how dear Shyamananda was to Radharani. One day, Shyamananda Prabhu was sweeping the Rasa-maṇḍala in Vrindavan, absorbed in ecstatic trance. Suddenly, by Radharani's transcendental mercy, he found her ankle bracelet lying on the ground. In his excitement, he touched the ankle bracelet to his forehead, where it left a mark which is preserved to this day as the tilaka marking of the disciple descendants of Shyamananda. It is known as nupura-tilaka.

### **Shyamananda Prabhu's preaching**

Narottama Thakur and Shyamananda primarily preached the message of

Mahaprabhu through kirtan. Srinivas sang kirtan in a style called Manohara-sahi, Narottama in Gaṛana-haṭi, and Shyamananda in Reṇeṭi. He would enchant the listeners with his heartfelt singing of kirtan. These styles of kirtan are no longer extant.

As a result of his preaching in Orissa, many Muslims also became Shyamananda's disciples. The most important of his innumerable disciples was Rasika Murari. Rasikananda was the son of Achyutananda, the zamindar of Rohiṇi village. He had another name, Murari, and was thus most commonly known as Rasika Murari. He was a very powerful preacher and his fame is still widespread through the villages of Orissa. A list of some of Shyamananda's prominent disciples is given in the Bhakti-ratnakara:

Shyamananda made disciples all over the place. A person can be purified by hearing their names: Radhananda, Purushottam, Manohara, Cintamaṇi, Balabhadra, Jagadisvara, Uddhava, Akrura, Madhuvana, Govinda, Jagannath, Gadadhara, Anandananda, and Radhamohana. Shyamananda was constantly immersed in the joys of kirtan in the association of these disciples. Poets have described his wonderful pastimes for the pleasure of everyone. (Bhakti-ratnakara 15.62-66)

Other than these disciples, Shyamananda converted a yogi named Damodar. Narahari Chakravarti has written the following account of that conversion:

There was a practitioner of yoga named Damodar. Shyamananda mercifully flooded him with devotional rasa. After becoming Shyamananda's disciple, Damodar cried and chanted the names of Nitai-Chaitanya. Who could remain untouched by his ecstatic absorption. He danced, crying out "bhakti is the best of all!" After delivering Damodar, Shyamananda continued to travel about, distributing the jewel of devotion to all. (Bhakti-ratnakara 15.55-8)

Shyamananda put on a large festival at Dharendra with Rasika Murari and Damodar which is still remembered today. When he left the world, Shyamananda turned over the service of Govinda at Gopivallabhapura. Shyamananda's disciples and their descendants still worship his deity Radha-Shyamasundar in Vrindavan. This temple is still one of the principle pilgrimage sites in Vrindavan.

Shyamananda Prabhu lived the last part of his life in Nrisinghapura in Orissa where he continued preaching Vaiṣṇavism. His earthly pastimes came to an end on the first day of the waning moon in the month of Asharh in 1552 of the Saka era (1630 AD).

## **Sri Ramachandra Kaviraj**

svardhunyas tira-bhumau sarajani-nagare gauḍa-bhupadi-patrad  
brahmaṇyad viṣṇu-bhaktad api suparicitat sri-cirañjiva-senat |  
yaḥ sri-ramendu-nama samajani paramaḥ sri-sunandabhīdhayaṁ  
so'yaṁ sriman narakhye sa hi kavi-nṛpatiḥ samyag asid abhinnaḥ||

The king of poets, Ramachandra, was born in the town of Sarajani on the banks of the Ganges as the son of Sunanda and Cirañjiva Sena, a well-known minister of the king of Gauḍa, a devotee of the Brahmins and Vishnu. Ramachandra was not in any way different from Narottama Das Thakur. (Saṅgita-madhava-nāṭaka, quoted at Bhakti-ratnakara 1.270)

Cirañjiva Sena was a resident of Srikhaṇḍa, whose wife's name was Sunanda. They had two sons, the older was Ramachandra, the younger Govinda. Ramachandra was a disciple of Srinivas Acharya who took the title Kaviraj. His siddha name was Karuṇa Manjari. (Verses quoted in Gauḍiya Vaiṣṇava Abhidhana.)

After the death of his father, Ramachandra went to live in Kumaranagara with his maternal grandfather, Damodar Kaviraj, who was a disciple of Narahari Sarakara. Later he went to live with his younger brother Govinda Kaviraj in the village of Tiliya Budhuri in Murshidabad district. This place has the distinction of being his Sripaṭa.

## **Ramachandra's wedding**

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur has written that Ramachandra never married, but was a lifelong renunciate. Hari Das Das, on the other hand, writes that Ramachandra did get married, but never lived with his wife. Srinivas Acharya saw Ramachandra on the very day of his wedding and said a few words to him about the temporary nature of material life, thus awakening within him an indifference to worldly life such that he never took up the duties of householder life. This story has been taken from a book which is not accepted as authoritative by everyone. The following quote is taken from there:

[Srinivas Acharya said,] “Just look! Out of enthusiasm for this marriage, so much money has been spent just to buy illusory conflict. You don't know that Maya has placed a noose around your neck and so you enjoy the performance of the auspicious invocations. People celebrate weddings thinking that they are auspicious when they are not, and always think that they have been fulfilled.”

## **The Kaviraj title**

Srinivas Acharya was overcome with affection for Ramachandra that he gave him the diksha mantra and engaged him as his personal servant. Though Vira Hambira became Srinivas Acharya's disciple, Ramachandra acted as his sikṣa-guru. Ramachandra also visited Vrindavan where he associated with Jiva Goswami and the other Vaishnavas, receiving their blessings. They were very pleased to hear his poetry, so much so that Jiva Goswami gave him the Kaviraj title. He was thus one of the eight Kavirajs (Aṣṭa-kaviraja). He was Narottama Thakur's favored companion in spiritual association and preaching.

Paramananda Bhattacharya, an ocean of love, Jiva Goswami and the other residents of Vraja, listened to Ramachandra recite his own poetic compositions and they joyfully awarded him the title of kaviraja. Ramachandra Kaviraj is full

of all virtues and is the second self of Narottama Das. (Bhakti-ratnakara 1.267-9)

Kaṁsari Sena, Rama Sena, Ramachandra Kaviraj, and the three Kavirajs: Govinda, Sriraṅga and Mukunda [are branches of Nityananda]. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 1.11.51)

His writings include Smaraṇa-camatkara, Smaraṇa-darpaṇa, Siddhanta-candrika, and Srinivas Acaryera Jivana-carita.

## **Ramachandra in Vrindavan**

All who saw Ramachandra Kaviraj were attracted by his physical beauty. Narahari Chakravarti has written an extensive description of him in the ninth wave of his Bhakti-ratnakara. Ramachandra Kaviraj's transformations when he visited the Radha Damodar temple with Jiva Goswami and saw Rupa Goswami's samadhi are amazing. Gopal Bhatta Goswami, Lokanatha Goswami and Bhugarbha Goswami all blessed him. He went to bathe in Radhakunḍa and Syamakunḍa and met Raghunath Das Goswami there. When he payed obeisances to Raghunath, the venerable saint affectionately embraced him.

yau sasvad-bhagavat-parayaṇa-parau saṁsara-parayaṇau

samyak satvata-tantra-vada-paramau niḥseṣa-siddhantagau |

sasvad-bhakti-rasa-pradana-rasikau paṣaṇḍa-hṛn-maṇḍalav

anyonya-priyatabhareṇa yugali-bhutav imau tau numah ||

I pay my obeisances to Narottama and Ramachandra who are devoted to all those who have dedicated their lives to the Supreme Lord, who help people to cross over the ocean of material life, who know all the scriptures completely and have understood all the transcendental doctrines, who are the most generous with the distribution of bhakti-rasa and who win the hearts of the atheists, who are constantly attached to each others affectionate company. (Saṅgita-madhava-

naṭaka, quoted at Bhakti-ratnakara 1.277)

In his Prarthana, Narottama Das prays for the association of Ramachandra Kaviraj.

daya kara sri-acarya prabhu srinivasa |

ramacandra saṅga mage narottama dasa ||

Please be merciful, Prabhu Srinivas Acharya! Narottama Das begs for Ramachandra's association.

Ramachandra's disappearance day is the Kṛṣṇa tṛtiya of Magh month. He passed away in Vrindavan after the disappearance of Srinivas Acharya.

## **Srila Rasikananda Deva Goswami**

### **Rasikananda's birth**

Rasikananda Deva Goswami was born in 1512 of the Saka era (1590 AD) in the village of Rohiṇi or Rayani in the Medinipura district. This village is situated at the confluence of the Suvarṇarekha and Dolaṅga rivers. His father's name was Raja Achyutananda and his mother, Bhavani Devi. The Suvarṇarekha River crosses back and forth across the present-day Bengal-Orissa border. Medinipura district used to be a part of the Orissan kingdom. Raja Achyutananda was an Orissan of the Karaṇa caste, the equivalent of the Kayasthas in Bengal. A Vaishnava is beyond the material qualities and should not be judged in terms of his caste origins. Achyutananda and Rasikananda were born in the Karaṇa caste in order to bless it.



Rasikananda was the son of an important zamindar. We can assume that he was a manjari in Krishna-lila. His guru Shyamananda had himself been initiated by Hriday Chaitanya Goswami who worshiped the Lord in the friendly mood. However, due to the association of the Vraja devotees led by Jiva Goswami, he took shelter of the conjugal mood. Shyamananda thus initiated Rasikananda into the worship of Radha and Krishna.

Rasikananda was also known by the name Rasika Murari. Mother Jahnava's disciple Nityananda Das wrote in his Prema-vilasa that Shyamananda had two principle disciples, one named Rasikananda, the other Murari, both of whom lived in Rayani. But Narahari Chakravarti indicates clearly in Bhakti-ratnakara that both names refer to the same individual:

In the village of Rayani lives the famous son of Achyutananda. He had two names: Rasikananda and Murari. Thus he was also known as Rasika-Murari. From his early childhood, he was learned in the scriptures. (Bhakti-ratnakara 15.27-8)

From the Bhakti-ratnakara, we learn that when exiled from Ayodhya, the son of Dasaratha Lord Ramachandra stayed for some time with Lakṣmaṇa and Sita in the village of Barajita, not far from Rayani. He there established the Shiva liṅga named Ramesvara. The zamindar of this area was Achyuta. He took good care of his subjects and was a strict follower of religious principles. His wife was also well-known as a faithful and loyal wife. Rasika Murari learned to serve his parents in an expert way, bringing them much satisfaction. Bhakti-ratnakara also notes that he had a devoted wife name Icchamayi Devi or Icchadei, who was from village of Ghaṇṭasila on the banks of the Suvarṇarekha. This village also has a certain historical renown as a place where the Paṇḍavas stayed during their exile. It was in this village that Rasika Murari first met his guru, an event which has been elaborately described in the Bhakti-ratnakara.

### **Rasika Murari meets Shyamananda Prabhu**

One day, Rasika Murari was meditating in a solitary place, anxious to find a spiritual master who could give him spiritual direction. He had entered into a

very deep meditation when he heard a disembodied voice say, <Murari! You need be anxious no longer. Your guru is Shyamananda and you will meet him here very shortly. Take shelter of him and your life will be successful.>

Upon hearing this divine message, Murari began chanting the name of Shyamananda on his beads with joyful enthusiasm. He spent the entire night crying out of his desire to meet his guru, until finally at the end of the night, he had a dream vision of Shyamananda Prabhu who said to him, “Don’t worry any longer, for you will meet me this very day.”

At dawn, Rasika Murari was on the lookout for his guru when he saw the tall figure of Shyamananda approaching him, as effulgent as the sun. Surrounded by his disciples like Kisora Das, he was dancing in a state of absorption in divine love while chanting the names of Nityananda and Chaitanya. Having waited anxiously for so long to encounter his guru, Rasika Murari immediately fell down at his feet. Syamanada affectionately lifted him up and embraced him. Then, after giving him the Radha-Krishna mantra, he offered him up to Chaitanya and Nityananda Prabhus. This whole story reveals how one can find one’s guru through sincere prayers.

### **Rasikananda becomes a potent preacher**

Rasikananda Deva Goswami served his guru, fully committing himself in body, mind and soul. So much so that in a short time he was recognized as Shyamananda’s chief disciple and a very powerful preacher and initiating guru himself. In fact, it is a truism that a good disciple becomes a good teacher. A spiritual master may have innumerable disciples in name only who call him their guru, but only a true disciple who has dedicated himself completely to his spiritual master is imbued with all the powers of the guru. With the spiritual powers invested in him by his guru, Rasikananda was able to convert many criminals, atheists, Muslims, and other fallen spirit souls to the path of devotion, bestowing the jewel of prema upon them all.

On one occasion, a wicked Muslim tried to silence Rasika Murari by having him attacked by an intoxicated elephant, but Rasikananda was able to

transform even the elephant into a disciple and engage him in the service of Vishnu and the Vaishnavas. All who witnessed this amazing event were overwhelmed with astonishment at Rasika Murari's spiritual power.

Shyamananda turned the seva of his personal Govinda deity in Gopivallabhapura over to Rasikananda.

He [Shyamananda] brought down a rainstorm of ecstatic love on Gopivallabhapura. Then he bestowed the service of Govindadeva on Rasikananda. News of Rasikananda's spiritual potency spread far and wide as he saved many atheists and criminals through his blessings. He mercifully gave the treasure of devotion to Muslims as he wandered from village to village with his disciples. He made a disciple of the elephant sent by an evil man, engaging him in the service of Krishna and the Vaishnavas. The evil Muslim zamindar then came and surrendered to him. He delivered unlimited living beings without any consideration of their caste background. Rasikananda remained constantly intoxicated in Harinama sankirtan. Who will not be overcome with emotion on reciting his virtues? (Bhakti-ratnakara 15.81-6)

The Prema-vilasa also says in the 19th chapter, "He delivered many criminals and Muslims."

The Raja of Mayurbhanj, Vaidyanatha Bhanj, in Orissa was also attracted to the transcendental power of Rasikananda and became his disciple. Other important disciples were Gaṇapati, the zamindar of Paṭasapura in Medinipura; Sri Bhima and Srikara, the zamindars of Dharendra; Ahammad Beg, the son-in-law of the governor of Orissa, Ibrahim Khan.

Rasikananda Deva Goswami wrote a number of works, including Shyamananda-sataka, Bhakta-Bhagavataṣṭaka, and Kunjakeli-dvadasaka.

The great Dharendra festival organized by Shyamananda with the participation of Rasika Murari, Damodar and others is remembered to this day by their descendants.

## **Rasikananda's disappearance**

It is said that just prior to Rasikananda's disappearance in AD 1652, he went to a village named Vamsadaha near Jalesvara with seven disciples. Mahaprabhu passed through this village when travelling to Puri with Nityananda (Chaitanya Bhagavat 3.2.263-4)

They walked from there to Remuna, chanting kirtan the whole way, arriving in the courtyard of the Gopinath temple. Suddenly Rasikananda merged into the body of the Gopinath deity. His disciples also left their bodies in the same place. Rasika Murari's flower samadhi and those of his seven associates are still maintained in the courtyard of the Kṣiracora Gopinath temple.

An annual festival lasting twelve days is held in Remuna to celebrate his disappearance. This takes place on the Shiva-caturdasi in the month of Magh.

Visvambharananda Deva Goswami, the author of the celebrated Astikyadarsana, was Rasikananda's descendant.

## **Sri Ganga Mata Goswamini & Hari Das Pandit Goswami**

Ganga Mata Goswamini was initiated in the line of Gauranga's sakti, Srila Gadadhara Pandit Goswami, by Hari Das Pandit Goswami. Krishnadas Kaviraj Goswami himself has described this Hari Das's character in his Chaitanya Charitamrita:

The chief servitor of the Govinda temple was Sri Hari Das Pandit. His qualities and fame are known all over the world; he was gentle, tolerant, peaceful, magnanimous, grave, sweet in his words, and very sober in his endeavors. He was respectful to everyone and worked for the benefit of all. Diplomacy, envy and jealousy were unknown to his heart. The fifty general qualities of Lord Krishna were all present in his body... Ananta Acharya, a disciple of Gadadhara Pandit, was always absorbed in love of Godhead, magnanimous and advanced in all respects. He was a reservoir of all good qualities. No one can estimate how great he was. Pandit Hari Das was his beloved disciple. (Chaitanya Charitamrita

1.8.54-7, 59-60)

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur writes in his Anubhaṣya: “During the advent of Lord Sri Krishna, Ananta Acharya was Sudevi, one of the eight gopis. This is stated in the Gaura-gaṇoddesa-dipika, verse 165, as follows: ‘Ananta Acharya Goswami was formerly Sudevi-gopi in Vraja [Vrindavan].’ According to the disciplic succession descending from him at the famous Ganga-mata monastery, he is known as Vinoda manjari. One of his disciples was Hari Das Pandit Goswami, who is also known as Sri Raghu Gopal and as Sri Rasa manjari. He had two important disciples: Lakshmipriya and her niece, Ganga-mata, daughter of the Raja of Puṇṭiya.”

More is learned about Ganga-mata's holy life from Hari Das Das's Gauḍiya Vaiṣṇava Abhidhana and, in more detail, from Sundarananda Vidyavinoda's Srikṣetra, where an elaborate account is given.

### **Sachi Devi goes to live in Vraja**

Ganga Mata Goswamini's original name was Sachi Devi. She was born in Puntiya which is in the Rajashahi district of present-day Bangla Desh. Her father was an important zamindar or raja, whose name was Naresa Narayan. From her early childhood, Sachi Devi was indifferent to family life and devoted to Krishna. Her parents saw this and wanted to see her married as soon as possible, but Sachi told them that she refused to accept any mortal as her husband. When she announced her determination to remain unmarried in this way, her parents were troubled but could do nothing to change her mind. When her mother died, Sachi Devi left home and set out on a pilgrimage which led her first to Puri and then to Vrindavan.

Upon her arrival in Vrindavan Dhama, she met Hari Das Pandit Goswami and felt as though making contact with him had made her entire pilgrimage worthwhile. She became anxious to take initiation from him, but he hesitated at first because of her wealthy family background. Later, however, when he saw her asceticism and her unswerving determination to engage in pure devotional activity, he gave her initiation in the eighteen-syllabled mantra. This event took

place in the Govindaji temple on the Chaitra Sukla Ekadasi.

After having received these blessings from her guru, she began to engage in intense bhajana, subsisting through madhukari, i.e., by begging from door to door for morsels of bread. After a year of this intense devotional activity, she was told by her spiritual master to live in Radha Kund with her spiritually advanced aunt and god-sister, Lakshmipriya, who regularly chanted three lakhs of Names every day. As a part of their regular spiritual practice, the two of them daily circumambulated Govardhana.

After several years of such practice at Radha Kund, when Sachi had become very advanced in her devotional life, her guru sent her to Purushottam Kṣetra to recover the home of Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya, which had fallen into disrepair. Taking the command of her spiritual master as her all in all, Sachi Devi came to Jagannath Puri and took the kṣetra-sannyasa vow. At that time, all that remained of Sarvabhauma's house was a single run-down building which housed his Damodar Salagrama-sila.

Even while she had lived at home in Puṇṭiya, Sachi Devi had studied the scriptures. In Vrindavan, furthermore, she had thoroughly studied the Bhagavata Purāṇa. In order to salvage Sarvabhauma's residence, she set out to preach. Her explanations of the Bhagavat and her transcendental qualities made such an impression on the public that her discourses soon attracted large audiences. It did not take long before her fame had spread so widely that the king of Orissa himself, Mukunda Deva, came to listen to her Bhagavat lectures. He too became a devoted follower after being impressed by her learning and her devotional qualities.

## **The Svetagaṇga**

According to the Utkala-khaṇḍa, there was a King Sveta in the Treta Yuga who was a devotee of Jagannath. He made arrangements for Jagannath's bhoga just as Indradyumna had done. One morning he came to the temple and saw the offerings which were made by the gods--thousands and thousands of wonderful gifts which were beyond the power of any mortal to present to the Lord. Sveta

became disturbed at the insignificance of his own offerings and stood at the temple door, his head hung in shame. As he was meditating on his own insignificance, he had a vision in which he saw Lakshmi Devi herself taking his food offerings and feeding them to both sets of Jagannath deities [FN: Besides the main deities, there is a second set, known as the vijaya-vigraha.] who were eating them with great enthusiasm. The King immediately thought himself consummated by this vision and he continued to serve Jagannath with unflagging enthusiasm. Jagannath eventually granted him the boon of being liberated in a spot which faces Matsya Madhava, halfway between Akṣaya Bāṭa and the ocean, which was subsequently named Sveta Madhava in his honor. The tank excavated here was also named Svetagaṅga. On the banks of this tank, deities of Sveta Madhava, Matsya Madhava and the nine planets are still worshiped.

One night, the king of Orissa, Mukunda Deva, had a dream in which Jagannath Deva appeared to him and told him to give Sachi Devi a tract of land which bordered this Sveta-gaṅga. The next morning, the King joyfully came to see Sachi Devi and told her about the dream. Though she had no interest in increasing her worldly possessions, Sachi Devi decided to accept the King's gift for the sake of her guru-given mission to improve the condition of Sarvabhauma's house. Prior to that she had had to beg for the wherewithal to serve the deities. Wherever there is true devotion to the Lord, the trouble which one has to take to serve him is not seen as trouble, but rather as an opportunity and a source of joy.

### **How Sachi came to be known as Gangamata**

Not long afterward, a miraculous occurrence took place. One Kṛṣṇa Trayodasi, an opportune moment came for the Maha Varuṇi Ganges bath. Many people who seek to accumulate pious credits make the trip to the Ganges for this auspicious occasion. Indeed, many of Sachi Devi's friends asked her to accompany them, but she could not abandon her kṣetra-sannyasa vows nor her service to the deities, so she was obliged to plead that it was impossible for her to go.

Even though she did not really want to go, Jagannath Deva himself made

arrangements for her to bathe in the Ganges. That night he appeared to her in a dream and told her to take bath in the Svetagaṅga in the middle of the night. Sachi Devi followed his instructions, but as soon as she entered the water, she had a vision of Ganga Devi herself. She was carried away in a strong river current which came from nowhere and suddenly found herself inside the Jagannath temple. But she continued to see herself bathing in the midst of her friends from Puri. She not only saw the Ganges and all those who were immersed in its waters, but she could hear the joyful noise of the bathing crowds.

And she was not the only one. The temple gatekeepers awakened on hearing this hubbub and called Lord Jagannath's pujaris. They in turn gave a report to the King himself who ordered them to open the temple doors. When they finally flung the doors open, they saw no one but Sachi Devi standing there alone. Jagannath's pujaris were confused and at first did not know what to do. They assumed that Sachi Devi had broken into the temple with the intention of robbing the Deities' valuables and that they had caught her red-handed. But by their suspicions they committed an offense to a great devotee. As a result, they were attacked by various diseases and distresses--so much so that the service to Jagannath was affected.

Jagannath Deva finally appeared to the King again and told him what had really happened. Being influenced by Sachi Devi's pure devotional attitude, Jagannath himself had made the Ganges flow from his feet to bathe Sachi Devi directly in the currents of his caraṇamṛta. The King and the other servants of the Lord could only be freed from their offenses if they apologized to Sachi Devi and took initiation from her.

King Mukunda Deva went to Sachi Devi with his entourage, the temple guards and servants. They paid her their prostrated obeisances and begged for her forgiveness. Though the King and all the pujaris, etc., asked her for initiation, she only gave the mantra to the King in obedience to Jagannath's order. The King wanted to give a large amount of land as guru-dakṣiṇa, but Sachi Devi refused it. When the King continued to beg for an opportunity to render service, she finally said that every midday he could send two containers of mahaprasadi rice and one of vegetables, a cloth and 160 paisa for the service of the Vaishnavas. From that day onward, Sachi was known as Ganga-mata and Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya's house as Ganga-mata Math and to this day, after the midday offering at the Jagannath temple, these same items are sent to the Ganga-mata Math.



Another of those who were blessed by initiation from Ganga Mata Goswamini was a certain Smarta Brahmin named Mahiratha Sarma from Dhananjayapura.

## **Rasika Raya**

There was a deity of Krishna named Rasika Raya in the house of Candra Sarma, a resident of Jaipur in Rajasthan. As a result of sevaparadha, offenses in the performance of service to this deity, this Brahmin had no descendants to continue the family line. Jagannath Deva appeared to him in a dream and told him to bring the deity to Puri and to give it to Ganga-mata if he wished to be rid of the effects of his offenses. The Brahmin did as he was told and appeared at Ganga-mata's door to offer her the service of Rasika Raya. At first she was not ready to accept, as it was impossible for her to give the kind of royal service which was due such a deity. Finally, the Brahmin simply hid the deity amongst the tulasi bushes and went away. Rasika Raya appeared to Ganga-mata in a dream and told her that he wanted her to accept and serve him. Having been so ordered, Ganga-mata joyfully took the deity in and organized a festival in his honor.

At present there are five pairs of deities in the Ganga-mata Math: Sri Sri Radha Rasika Raya, Sri Sri Radha Shyamasundar, Sri Sri Radha Madanamohana, Sri Sri Radhavinoda and Sri Sri Radharamana. Other than these, the Damodar Salagrama-sila of Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya, a dancing figure of Gauranga and a Gopal deity are also present on the altar there.

According to the information given by the Math, Gangamata was born on the Sukla-dasami of Jyestha in AD 1601 and entered the eternal pastimes in AD 1721. Branches of her Math are found in Jagannath Puri at the Haveli Math and Gopal Math, as well as the Gopal Math in Cuttack district's Tāṅgi village.

Devotees of Krishna may be born in any race, in any caste, or indeed in either sex. They are still to be considered the best of human beings and worshipable by all. There are many examples of women who attained the supreme achievement of pure devotional service to the Lord, such as the wives

of the Vedic Brahmins who due to the demands of bhakti ignored the orders of their less-advanced husbands to serve Krishna. In the Kaliyuga, also, as a result of the blessings of Hari Das Thakur, a prostitute was transformed into a renowned Vaiṣṇavi and many great devotees went to seek audiences from her in order to receive her saintly association.

## **Srila Vishvanath Chakravarti Thakur**

visvasya natha-rupo'sau bhakti-vartma-pradarsanat |

bhakta-cakre vartitvat cakravarty-akhyayabhavat ||

Because he revealed the path of devotion, he is considered to be identical with the Lord of the Universe, Vishvanath; and because he was predominant in the circle of Vaishnavas, he held the title Chakravarti.

## **Vishvanath's birth and disciplic succession**

Vishvanath took birth in a family of Rāḥiḥya Brahmins in the village of Devagrama in Nadia district in about 1560 of the Saka era (1638 AD). Some others suggest 1576 (1656) as his year of birth. The Gauḍiḥya Vaiṣṇava Abhidhana identifies his father as Rama Narayan Chakravarti. His mother's name is unknown. He had two older brothers, Ramabhadra and Raghunath. His spiritual master was Radharamaṇa Chakravarti, disciple of Krishnacaraṇa Chakravarti. Krishnacaraṇa Chakravarti was a disciple and, according to some, adopted son of Ganga Narayan Chakravarti. Vishvanath has summarized his guru-parampara at the beginning of the Rasa-pancadhyaya section of his Sarartha-darsini commentary on the Srimad Bhagavatam.

sri-rama-kṛṣṇa-gaṅga-caraṇan natva gurun uru-premṇaḥ |

srila-narottama-natha-srigauraṅga-prabhum naumi ||

In this verse, Radharamaṇa Chakravarti's name is abbreviated as Rama, Krishnacaraṇa's name as Krishna, and Ganga Narayan's name as Ganga. The word natha refers to Lokanatha Goswami, whose guru was Gauranga Mahaprabhu. Thus the entire disciplic succession of Vishvanath has been given in this one single verse.

### **Vishvanath's studies and writings**

After completing his studies of grammar in Devagrama, Vishvanath went to Saiyadabad in the Murshidabad district to study devotional scriptures from his guru. According to the Gauḍiya Vaiṣṇava Abhidhana, Vishvanath was married. Although he was married according to the rites, he never showed the slightest attachment for family life. It is said that he taught his wife the Bhagavat, giving her a taste for its nectar, and instructed her to devote herself to the worship of the Lord before he left home.

Srila Vishvanath Chakravarti Thakur followed the example of Sri Rupa and went to live in Vrindavan where he could dedicate himself to the devotional life. As a result of his commitment to following the orders of his spiritual master, he received many blessings from him. These blessings took shape in his good fortune to be able to live in various spots in Vraja-dham and write a great number of books on Gauḍiya Vaishnava subjects, which are considered to be a great treasure by those in the sampradaya. All his books and his commentaries on the Bhagavad-gita and Bhagavat are written in a Sanskrit which is clear and simple, but at the same time full of the nectar of devotion.

In the edition of the Bhagavad-gita published by the Sri Chaitanya Gauḍiya

Math, the following points are raised under the heading, “A description of the commentary”: “In Gaudiya Vaishnava history, Vishvanath was the guardian and chief teacher of the middle period. Amongst Vaishnavas of our day, a saying has been preserved about three of his works: kiraṇa-bindu-kaṇa, ei tin niye vaiṣṇava-paṇa -- Vishvanath’s resumes of Rupa Goswami’s Ujjvala-nilamaṇi (Ujjvala-nilamaṇi-kiraṇa), Bhakti-rasamṛta-sindhu (Bhakti-rasamṛta-sindhu-bindu), and Laghu-bhagavatamṛta (Bhagavatamṛta-kaṇa) are the source of transcendental joy for the Vaishnavas; studying them makes one a Vaishnava. After the disappearance of Mahaprabhu’s Vrindavan associates, Srinivas, Narottama and Shyamananda preserved the traditions and expanded the movement in Bengal. Vishvanath is the fourth descendant in the disciplic line from Narottama Das. Few acharyas of the Gaudiya Vaishnava school have been as productive as Vishvanath. Besides writing this large corpus of books, Vishvanath also made two other major contributions, both of which are related to preaching and kirtan.”

Rupa Kaviraj was excommunicated from Vaishnava society. He was the founder of an apasampradaya which taught that only renunciates were eligible to act as acharya, all householders are disqualified. He preached a distorted doctrine of raganuga bhakti which completely negates the value of vidhi-marga, minimizing the importance of hearing and chanting. To the benefit of the general public, Vishvanath has argued against this doctrine in the Sarartha-darsini commentary on the Third Canto of the Bhagavat. Rupa Kaviraj holds that no householder can take the Goswami title. Vishvanath counters this proposition by stating, on the basis of scripture, that any member of a dynasty of gurus who has the proper qualifications is entitled to be called a Goswami, i.e., he can do the work of a guru or acharya. However, to call one’s unworthy children Goswamis simply for the purpose of accumulating wealth and disciples is opposed to the scriptural conclusions and is to be considered unlawful, even if born in a family with a tradition of acting as gurus.

Vishvanath Chakravarti Thakur wrote Bengali songs under the pen-name of Harivallabha Das. Some people say that this name was given to him when he took the vairagi veṣa. In all respects, Vishvanath is worthy of superlatives, whether in his expertise in philosophical discourse, his knowledge of the Vaishnava scriptures, or his poetic talent.

The following is a list of the books written by Vishvanath: (1) Vraja-riti-cintamaṇi, (2) Camatkara-candrika, (3) Prema-samputa, (4) Gitavali, (5)

Subodhini commentary to Alaṅkāra-kaustubha, (6) Ananda-candrika commentary to Ujjvala-nilamaṇi, (7) a commentary on Gopal-tapani Upaniṣad, (8) Sri-Kṛṣṇa-bhavanamṛta, a maha-kavya, (9) Sri-Bhagavatamṛta-kaṇa, (10) Ujjvala-nilamaṇi-kiraṇa-lesa, (11) Bhakti-rasamṛta-sindhu-bindu, (12) Ragavartma-candrika, (13) Aisvarya-kadambini, which appears to have been lost, (14) Madhurya-kadambini, (15) Bhakti-sara-pradarsini, a commentary on Bhaktirasamṛta-sindhu, (16) Ananda-candrika, a commentary on the Ujjvala-nilamaṇi, (17) a commentary on the Danakeli-kaumudi, (18) a commentary on the Lalita-madhava, (19) an incomplete commentary on Chaitanya Charitamrita, (20) a commentary on the Brahma-saṁhita, (21) Sararthavarṣiṇi, a commentary on the Bhagavad-gita, (22) Sarartha-darsini, a commentary on the Srimad Bhagavatam.

He also wrote a number of small works which have been collected as Stavamṛta-lahari: (1) Guru-tattvaṣṭaka, (2) Mantra-datṭ-gurvaṣṭaka, (3) Paramaguror aṣṭaka, (4) Paratparaguror aṣṭaka, (5) Parama-paratparaguror aṣṭaka, (6) Sri-Lokanathaṣṭaka, (7) Sri-Narottamaṣṭaka, (8) Sri-Sacinandanaṣṭaka, (9) Sri-Svarupa-caritamṛta, (10) Svapna-vilasamṛtam, (11) Sri-Gopaladevaṣṭaka, (12) Sri-Madanamohanaṣṭaka, (13) Sri-Govindaṣṭaka, (14) Sri-Gopinathaṣṭaka, (15) Sri-Gokulanandaṣṭaka, (16) Svayaṁ Bhagavadaṣṭaka, (17) Sri-Radhakuṇḍaṣṭaka, (18) Jaganmohanaṣṭaka, (19) Anuragavalli, (20) Sri-Vṛndadevyāṣṭaka, (21) Sri-Vṛndavanaṣṭaka, (22) Sri-Radhika-dhyanamṛta, (23) Sri-Rupacintamaṇi, (24) Sri-Nandisvaraṣṭaka, (25) Sri-Govardhanaṣṭaka, (26) Sri-Saṅkalpa-kalpadruma, (27) Sri-Nikunja-virudavali, (28) Sri-Surata-kathamṛta, and (29) Sri-Syamakuṇḍaṣṭaka.

## **His student Baladeva**

When Vishvanath Chakravarti Thakur was old and hampered in his ability to travel, the acharyas of the Ramanuja sampradaya in the Galtā village of Jaipur attempted to convert the King of Jaipur to their school by denying that the Gaudiya school had any historical basis. They accused the Gaudiyas of not having a tie to any one of the four Vaishnava disciplic successions. They advised the King of Jaipur to take initiation from someone in the Ramanuja line. The King was confused by their arguments and asked Vishvanath, who was the most

prominent acharya of the Gaudiya school at that time, to come to Jaipur and answer the questions posed by the Ramanuja group. Due to his advanced age, Vishvanath was unable to go, but in his stead he sent his dear student, Baladeva Vidyabhuṣaṇa to defend the line.

One of the arguments of the Ramanujis was that the Gaudiya school had no commentary of its own on the Vedanta. Baladeva asked the accusers for some time -- seven days according to some, three months according to others -- to write a Gaudiya commentary on Vedanta. He was given the time and then he went to the Govinda temple and prayed to his guru and to the Lord to give him the power to write such a commentary. Govindaji's garland fell from around his neck and the pujaris placed it on Baladeva chest. Baladeva took this a sign that the Lord had given him authorization.

With the Lord's blessings, even the impossible becomes possible, and Baladeva undertook the writing of comments to the 500 sutras of the Brahmasutra, completing it in the limited time given him but without neglecting the aesthetic qualities of the Gaudiya tradition in any way. When he went to Galtā, the scholars of the other sampradayas were astonished by the quality of Baladeva's commentary. Because Govindaji himself had ordered its writing, the commentary became known as the Govinda-bhaṣya. It was after completing this commentary that Baladeva received the Vidyabhuṣaṇa title.

It is said of Vishvanath that when he wrote the Bhagavat, when it rained, water fell everywhere except the place where he was sitting. Thus, the ink did not run and the text remained intact.

Vishvanath established the service of Gokulananda, and the Gokulanandaji temple stands in Vrindavan. Vishvanath left this world in Radhakuṇḍa in ca. 1630 of the Saka era (1708 AD). The tithi was either the Sukla or Kṛṣṇa Pancami of the month of Magh.

**Srila Baladeva Vidyabhuṣaṇa**

The exact time and place of Sri Baladeva Vidyabhuṣaṇa's birth are unknown. Perhaps one day historians will be able to establish these facts beyond any doubt. From the little information that we do have about his life, we can conjecture that he was born in the 17th century of the modern era. Though we do not know the name of the exact village where he took birth, it was likely in the Balesore (Balesvara) district of Orissa, somewhere near Remuna. From the date given in his commentary on Rupa Goswami's Stavamala, it is clear that Baladeva was still living after the Battle of Plassey in 1757.

We know that Baladeva studied in one of the villages of the Chilka Lake area in southern Orissa. There he learned grammar, poetics and logic, achieving expertise in all these subjects. He began his studies of Vedanta there, but in order to study the commentaries in greater depth, he went to Mysore. He was there particularly impressed by the logical consistency of the Madhva suddha-dvaita commentary on the Vedanta sutras and became a disciple of that school and began living in a Tattvavadi monastery. After taking sannyas, he moved to Purushottam Kṣetra where he engaged many of the local scholars in debate, demonstrating the depth of his scholarship. His fame soon spread throughout the area.

Later, however, he met Radha Damodar Goswami, a scholar from Kanyakubja, under whose direction he studied Jiva Goswami's Ṣaṭ-sandarbhā in great detail. When he was convinced of the supremacy of the Gaudiya Vaishnava philosophy, he took initiation from Radha Damodar Goswami. He was thus initiated in Nityananda Prabhu's line. The following is his disciplic succession: (1) Gauri Das Pandit, (2) Hriday Chaitanya Prabhu, (3) Shyamananda Prabhu, (4) Rasikananda Deva Goswami, (5) Nayananda Goswami, (6) Radha Damodar Goswami, (7) Baladeva Vidyabhuṣaṇa.

Baladeva then continued his studies of the Gaudiya literature under Pitambara Das and later studied the Bhagavata Purāṇa under Vishvanath Chakravarti. He also took the Vaishnava vairagi's dress, at which time he was given the name Ekanti Govinda Das.

## **Baladeva's written works**

He was ordered by Vishvanath Chakravarti Thakur to go to Jaipur where he prayed to Rupa Goswami's Govindaji murti for the authorization to write a commentary on the Vedanta-sutra. He then composed the Govinda-bhaṣya and took it to Galta where he defeated the other sampradayas in debate, preserving the reputation of the Gaudiya school. After this episode, he was given the title Vidyabhuṣaṇa. This story has been told in greater detail in this volume in the chapter on Vishvanath Chakravarti Thakur.

The following is a list of Baladeva Vidyabhuṣaṇa's written works:

- (1) A commentary on the Brahma Sutras, Govinda-bhaṣya;
- (2) Siddhanta-ratnam,
- (3) Vedanta-syamantaka,
- (4) Prameya-ratnavali,
- (5) Siddhanta-darpaṇa,
- (6) Sahitya-kaumudi,
- (7) Kavya-kaustubha,
- (8) Vyakaraṇa-kaumudi (which appears to have been lost);
- (9) Pada-kaustubha,
- (10) Vaishnava-nandini, a commentary on the Tenth Canto,
- (11) A commentary on Gopal-tapani Upaniṣad;
- (12) Commentaries on the Isa and nine other upaniṣads;
- (13) Gitabhuṣaṇa-bhaṣya, a commentary on Bhagavad-gita;
- (14) Namarthasudha, a commentary on the Vishnusahasranama;
- (15) Saraṅga-raṅgada, a commentary on the Laghubhagavatamṛta;



- (16) Stavamala-vibhuṣaṇa, a commentary on Stavamala;
- (17) a commentary on Rupa Goswami's Naṭika-candrika;
- (18) Chandaḥ-kaustubha-bhaṣya;
- (20) A commentary on Rasikananda's Syamananda-sataka;
- (21) A commentary on Candraloka (which appears to have been lost);
- (22) Kṛṣṇanandini, a commentary on Sahitya-kaumudi;
- (23) Govindabhaṣya-ṭika, a commentary on his own Govinda-bhaṣya;
- (24) Sukṣma, a further clarification of his own Siddhanta-ratnam;

Other than these, it is claimed that Baladeva also wrote an Aisvarya-kadambini which is different from that written by Vishvanath Chakravarti Thakur. In the Aisvarya-kadambini by Vishvanath, there is a discussion of the dvaita and advaita doctrines, which is missing from Baladeva's work of that name.

It is said that Baladeva established the worship of the Vijaya Gopal deity in Galtā. His two most prominent disciples were Uddhava Das and Sri Nanda Mishra.

In the succession of bona-fide gurus which make up the Madhva-Gaudiya-Sarasvata-Vaishnava sampradaya, Baladeva Vidyabhūṣaṇa is to be remembered regularly. Simply demonstrating a connection through initiation to a family succession of initiating spiritual masters does not make one a bona-fide guru. One must demonstrate complete dedication to the supreme truth, brahma-niṣṭha. Only a pure devotee can be called a bona-fide guru.

visvanatha bhakata satha, baladeva Jagannath

taṁra priya bhakativinoda.

## **Sri Jagannath Das Babaji Maharaj**

gauravirbhava-bhumes tvam nirdeṣṭa bhagavat-priyaḥ |  
vaiṣṇava-sarvabhauma sri-jagannathaya te namaḥ ||

I offer my obeisances to you, Jagannath. Because you were the foremost Vaishnava of your time, you received the title Vaishnava Sarvabhauma. You are very dear to the Lord and through your divine vision designated the place where Mahaprabhu appeared in this world.

### **Jagannath Das's position in the disciplic succession**

Throughout the world, any devotee who comes in the disciplic succession following Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur daily remembers Sri Jagannath Das Babaji Maharaj and prays for his mercy.

visvanatha bhakta satha, baladeva Jagannath  
tañra priya bhaktivinoda |  
maha-bhagavata vara, sri-gaura-kisora-vara  
hari-bhajanete yañra moda ||  
sri-varṣabhanavi-vara, sada sevya-seva-para  
tañra dayita-dasa nama |

[I offer respects to] Vishvanath along with his devotees, to Baladeva and to Jagannath, whose dear disciple is Bhaktivinoda. Sri Gaura Kisora Das, the great devotee, whose great pleasure is the worship of the Lord. Radharani is the daughter of Vṛṣabhanu and is always fixed in service to her Lord. I am the servant of him who is dear to her.

The disciplic succession has also been written in Sanskrit. Jagannath is mentioned there in the following way:

vaiṣṇava-sarvabhaumaḥ sri-Jagannath-prabhus tatha |  
sri-mayapura-dhamnas tu nirdeṣṭa sajjana-priyaḥ ||

Next in the line is Jagannath Prabhu, known as Vaishnava Sarvabhauma. Very dear to the saintly, he designated the dham of Sri Mayapur.

There were four dark periods in the Gaudiya sampradaya: (1) the period preceding the appearance of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu; (2) the period which followed the disappearance of the Six Goswamis; (3) after the disappearance of Srinivas Acharya, Narottama Das Thakur, Shyamananda, and Rasikananda Deva Goswami; and (4) the period following the disappearance of Vishvanath Chakravarti Thakur and Baladeva Vidyabhuṣaṇa.

One should not think that the Madhva-Gaudiya disciplic succession following in the spirit of Rupa Goswami has been disrupted on account of these periods of darkness. Sometimes spiritual masters in the disciplic succession are individual performers of solitary bhajana (viviktanandi), and sometimes preachers who delight in increasing the size of the congregation. It may appear to the untrained eye that one is a weaker or stronger acharya by measuring his potency in terms of the number of disciples he makes, but this is not an appropriate measuring stick.

Baladeva Vidyabhuṣaṇa's disciple was Uddhava Das or Uddhara Das. He had a disciple also named Uddhava Das, who had a student named Madhusudana Das. This Madhusudana Das was famed throughout the Vaishnava world as the Siddha Babaji from Surya Kund. Madhusudana Das gave the paramahansa-veṣa (babaji initiation) to Jagannath Das Babaji. Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur has described his disciplic succession as follows: "Sri

Uddhava Das or Uddhara Das was the follower of the author of the Govinda-bhaṣya, Baladeva Vidyabhuṣaṇa. He was followed by Uddhava Das, Madhusudana Das and Jagannath Das Babaji, all of whom adopted the lifestyle of the paramahansa, preaching the path of pure devotion by their example. In the Gaudiya Vaishnava sampradaya, they are the objects of the greatest faith and reverence.”

From this statement of Srila Prabhupada, we learn that all these bhajananandis not only practiced the anchorite life of solitary worship, but engaged in preaching activities as well, serving as acharyas.

### **Jagannath Das’s life in Vrindavan**

Jagannath Das was born in a respectable family in Tangail district in what is today Bangla Desh, in around 1780 AD. According to some people he was born in Taras village in Pabna district in a family of Varendra-kayasthas. The names of his parents are unknown.

After taking the paramahansa-veṣa, Jagannath Das Babaji set the exemplary standard of intense bhajana in Nabadwip and Vrindavan, so much so that he was accepted by all the bhajananandi Vaishnavas as their leader. He remained in this world for more than a century and a half.

While Jagannath Das was engaged in bhajana in Vraja, a certain professional speaker on the Bhagavat from Katwa decided to move to Vrindavan to make his living, looking for gold and glory. Even though he gave an excellent discourse on the Bhagavat, the renounced Vaishnavas showed no enthusiasm to come to listen to him. When he inquired into the reasons for this, Jagannath and the other Vaishnavas told him any discourse on the Bhagavat by someone who has other goals in mind cannot be called a true explanation of the Bhagavat. He is unable to have a beneficial effect on anyone, not even himself. Indeed, such discourses have a negative effect on the consciousness of the listener. They advised the professional speaker to give up the business of giving Bhagavat discourses as a means of making his living. By the grace of the Vaishnavas led by Jagannath Das, this money-minded Vaishnava was completely transformed

and he gave up his false pride in his learning and high birth. He became a great devotee with such humility that he paid prostrated obeisances to every creature living in the holy dham.

Babaji Maharaj was himself a dedicated and intense bhajananandi, but he did not believe that disciples who were unqualified and filled with material desires should be allowed act in ways detrimental to service to Vishnu and the Vaishnavas on the pretext of engaging in the service of the Holy Name. He engaged his less qualified disciples who had taken the renounced order in working the garden next to his cottage, so that he could offer vegetables to the Deity and the Vaishnavas. If the senses are not engaged in the service of Vishnu and the Vaishnavas, then it is impossible to experience the power of the Holy Name and one does not develop the qualifications necessary to chant properly. When the senses and sense objects of an individual are engaged in relation to the body and bodily relations, then naturally attachment arises for these. When one is fixed in the consciousness that one's self and one's senses belong to the Lord, and then engages his senses in the service of the devotees and the Lord, then one's feelings of love and possessiveness for him increase.

### **Jagannath Das meets Bhaktivinoda Thakur**

Jagannath Das Babaji met Bhaktivinoda Thakur for the first time in 1880 AD. Their second meeting took place in the village of Amalajora in Burdwan district in 1891. On this occasion, they spent the entire night (it was Ekadasi) discussing Krishna-katha. Jagannath Das Baba encouraged Bhaktivinoda Thakur to preach Gaura's name and abode.

Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur gave an account of this eventful night in his Sajjana-toṣaṇi magazine as follows: "After spending the whole night in the Ekadasi vigil, at eight in the morning, people from the entire village gathered together to go on the nagara-sankirtan through its streets. Placing the venerable Jagannath Das Babaji Maharajji at the head of the group, they made their way to the Prapannasrama. It is impossible to describe Babaji Maharaj's ecstatic transformations during this kirtan. Though he is over a hundred years old, he dances like a lion, sometimes singing out the couplet,

nitai ki nama eneche re | nama eneche namer haṭe,

sraddhara mule nama diteche re ||

‘What a divine name Nitai has brought! He has brought the name to the marketplace of the Name and is selling it for the price of faith!’

“As he sang, he cried and fell to the ground in ecstasy. I then saw something transpire which I had never seen before. All those who were present were affected by his mood: their eyes filled with tears and their hairs stood on end, and even though they could barely sing, they remained absorbed in the kirtan and danced wildly.”

In his autobiography, Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur has also written: “In 1892, Jagannath Das Babaji and many other Vaishnavas participated in the sankirtan festival in Godruma and then in Sri Mayapur. In the month of Magh in 1299 (Bengali), Babaji Maharaj came from Kuliya-Nabadwip with his associates to Bhaktivinoda Thakur’s residence, Surabhikunja, in Godrumadvipa. A great sankirtan festival was held there on Wednesday, the 27th of Magh.”

### **Babaji Maharaj designates Mahaprabhu’s birth site**

A physically powerful Vrajavasi named Vihari Das Babaji was Jagannath Das Babaji Maharaj’s personal servant. He used to place Babaji Maharaj in a large wicker basket and carry him from place to place. Even though Babaji Maharaj was very aged, his sight was still good. His eyelids drooped, however, covering his eyes, and he had to lift them in order to see. It is said that Vihari Dasji carried Babaji Maharaj in the wicker basket as far as the birthplace of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. Upon arrival, Babaji Maharaj got out of the basket and began to dance madly, singing the names Jaya Sachinandana Gaura-Hari. Everyone was amazed to see the old babaji dance in this way. Through his divine vision, Babaji

Maharaj pointed out the site of Mahaprabhu's birth and then later the site of the breaking of the mridanga by the Qazi. This place is now known as Khola-bhaṅgara Ḍaṅga and is, of course, the same as Srivasa Angan..

In Sajjana-toṣaṇi, Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur has described this event as follows: “At eleven o'clock in the morning on Thursday, the 20th of Phalguna in 1299 Baṅgabda (1892 AD), devotees filled three boats on the west bank of the Ganges in Nabadwip town. The great devotee Jagannath Das Babaji Maharaj was carried in a palanquin. By the time the party reached Mayapur it was impossible to count the number of people who had gathered. Dvarika Babu and a party of devotees carrying colorful flags was waiting for the renounced Vaishnavas with a joyous kirtan at Mahaprabhu's Janma-sthana. When all these devotees had gathered in the raised area where Mahaprabhu was born and started to dance, it was such a wondrous sight as had likely not been seen in Nabadwip-dham in four hundred years. Later the devotees sat down and after discussing the matter, decided that deity service should be established both at the birthplace and at Srivasa Angan. Jagannath Das Babaji Mahasaya proposed that Jagannath and Sachi Devi should be worshiped in one building and Mahaprabhu with Lakshmi Devi and Vishnupriya standing on his either side in another. On the other hand, deities of the Pancha Tattva should be consecrated in Srivasa Angan.”

In those days, there was a large kadamba tree at the Janmasthana in Mayapur. Babaji Maharaj came and danced under this tree. Sri Gaura Kisora Das Babaji used to sit under that tree chanting the Holy Name in deep trance. Jagannath Das Babaji had stayed a long time in a place named Bhajana-kuṭira in Koladvipa. Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur had a concrete veranda built for this cottage. Babaji Maharaj's samadhi tomb is situated there. Babaji Maharaj used to visit Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur in his house, Bhakti Bhavana, in Ram Bag in Calcutta. There he met Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur upon whom he showered unlimited affection. When he learned that Saraswati Thakur had achieved incomparable expertise in astrology, he asked him to make an almanac based on the Vaishnava calendar. Later, the Chaitanya Math began publishing the Nabadwip-Panjika in accordance with Babaji Maharaj's wishes.

## **Babaji Maharaj's disappearance**

When approaching the end of his sojourn in this world, Babaji Maharaj became hunched and tiny looking. Nevertheless, when he danced in kirtan, he would look six feet tall, a magnificent specimen of humanity, with long arms reaching down to his knees. He would sometimes jump five or six feet into the air when absorbed in the ecstatic mood of kirtan.

Jagannath Das's disappearance took place on the Sukla-pratipad of the month of Phalguna, Monday, February 25, 1895. Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur wrote the following about this in Sajjana-toṣaṇi (22,2): "At ten o'clock in the morning, in the Bhajana-kuṭīra in Koladvīpa in Nabadwip town, the old general of the Vaishnavas went to his eternal abode. The Siddha Babaji went to the spiritual world, but left this world in darkness. We will no longer be able to see his ecstatic dancing in kirtan with these mundane eyes. May he bestow his blessings on us from his place in the eternal home."

Rasavihari Goswami of Puruniya in Burdwan district was Jagannath Das's initiated disciple. Rasavihari Goswami initiated the independent King of Tripura, Raja Isanacandra Manikya Bahadura. Rasavihari Goswami's deity, Rasaviharijiu, is worshiped to this day in the Raja's palace.

### **Sri-Srila-Jagannathaṣṭakam**

rupanuganaṁ pravaraṁ sudantaṁ  
sri-gauracandra-priya-bhakta-rajam |  
sri-radhika-madhava-citta-ramaṁ  
vande jagannatha-vibhuṁ vareṇyam ||1||

I venerate great Jagannath, the best of the Vaishnavas, the foremost of the followers of Srila Rupa Goswami, the king of Gauranga's dear devotees, who takes pleasure in remembering Radhika and Madhava.

sri-surya-kunḍasrayiṇaḥ kṛpalor



vidvad-vara-sri-madhusudanasya |  
preṣṭha-svarupeṇa virajamaṇam  
vande jagannatha-vibhum varenḥyam ||2||

I venerate great Jagannath, the best of the Vaishnavas, who was the dearest associate of the most merciful resident of Surya Kund, Sri Madhusudana Das Babaji.

sridhama-vṛndavana-vasi-bhakta-  
nakṣatra-raji-sthita-soma-tulyam |  
ekanta-namasrita-saṅgha-palaṁ  
vande Jagannath-vibhum varenḥyam ||3||

I venerate great Jagannath, the best of the Vaishnavas, who stood out from the rest of the devotees of Sri Dham Vrindavan just like the moon amongst the stars. He was the protector of the association of Vaishnavas who are uniquely dedicated to the chanting of the Holy Name.

vairagya-vidya-hari-bhakti-diptam  
daurjanya-kapaṭya-vibheda-vajram |  
sraddha-yuteṣv adara-vṛttimantaṁ  
vande Jagannath-vibhum varenḥyam ||4||

I venerate great Jagannath, the best of the Vaishnavas, aglow with devotion to Hari combined with knowledge and renunciation, a veritable thunderbolt to those who are wicked and pretenders and ever affectionate to the faithful.

samprerito gaura-sudhaṁsuna yas  
cakre hi taj-janma-grha-prakasam |  
devair nutaṁ vaiṣṇava-sarvabhaumaṁ

vande Jagannath-vibhum vareṇyam ||5||

I venerate great Jagannath, the best of the Vaishnavas, who was directed by Gauranga himself to point out the place where he appeared on this earth. He is worshiped by even the gods as the sovereign of the Vaishnavas on this earth.

sancarya sarvaṁ nija-sakti-rasim

yo bhakti-purṇe ca vinoda-deve

tene jagatyam hari-nama-vanyam

vande Jagannath-vibhum vareṇyam ||6||

I venerate great Jagannath, the best of the Vaishnavas, who infused the devoted Bhaktivinoda Thakur with all of his own potency, and through him unleashed the flood of Harinama throughout the universe.

sri-nama-dhamnoḥ prabala-pracare

ihaparam prema-rasabdhi-magnam |

sri-yoga-piṭhe kṛta-nṛtya-bhaṅgam

vande Jagannath-vibhum vareṇyam ||7||

I venerate great Jagannath, the best of the Vaishnavas, always immersed in the ocean of sacred rapture and engaged in forcefully preaching the Holy Names and the Lord's abode. He danced ecstatically in the Yoga-piṭha at Mayapur.

mayapura-dhamani sakta-cittam

gaura-prakasena ca moda-yuktam |  
sri-nama-ganair galad-asru-netraṁ  
vande Jagannath-vibhum vareṇyam ||8||

I venerate great Jagannath, the best of the Vaishnavas, who is totally attached to the Holy Dhama of Mayapur, who is joyful from the vision of Gauranga, whose eyes flow with tears from the chanting of the Holy Names.

he deva he vaiṣṇava-sarvabhauma  
bhaktya parabhuta-mahendra-dhiṣṇya |  
tvad-gatra-vistara-kṛtiṁ supuṇyam  
vande muhur bhaktivinoda-dharam ||9||

O Lord! O sovereign of the Vaishnavas! Through your devotion you have overcome even the heavens. I constantly venerate the most pious line of Bhaktivinoda Thakur which has developed from your body and works.

### **The Visva-Vaishnava-raja-sabha**

For the benefit of those devotees who wish to know more, we include here the contents of an article by His Holiness Bhaktipramoda Puri Goswami, the chairman of the editorial board of Chaitanya-vaṇi magazine, which summarizes some important information about Vaishnava Sarvabhauma Jagannath Das Babaji's life found in the book Sri-Saraswati-Jayasri, published by the Bagh Bazar Gaudiya Math in 1948.

Siddha Jagannath Das Babaji was devoted to the Mahamantra composed of sixteen words and thirty-two syllables. He never tolerated the chanting of any new-fangled mantra produced by someone's imagination to cross his lips, especially as these mantras oppose the doctrines of the Six Goswamis and are full of conflicting sentiments, thus leading to offenses.

The most venerable Babaji Maharaj would not allow anyone to take his photograph. Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur once made arrangements to have his photo taken at his Maniktola home in Calcutta, known as Bhakti Bhavan.

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur had the desire to reinstitute the Visva-Vaishnava-raja-sabha or World Vaishnava Association on the occasion of Vishnupriya Devi's appearance day. This took place in the midst of a kirtan at the Ultadanga maṭha, also known as the Bhaktivinoda Asana, on Feb. 5, 1919. Srila Prabhupada explained the history of the Visva-Vaishnava-Rajasabha. The following article appeared in Amrita Bazar Patrika, a Calcutta English-language daily, on the following 10th of February:

“On Wednesday last (5th instant) was celebrated with great eclat the Advent Ceremony of Sree Sree Visnupriya Devi at the same Asana (1 Ultadanga Junction Road). The occasion was solemnised by the reinstitution of Sree Viswa-Vaishnava-Rajasabha as inaugurated by no less a Personage than Sree Jeeva Goswami Himself eleven years after the passing of Sree Sree Mahaprabhu and as given a fresh impetus by Sree Bhaktivinod Thakur 33 years ago.”

A full historical account of the Visva-Vaishnava-Rajasabha was given in Sajjana-toṣaṇi, vol. 21, no. 9.

### **Srila Prabhupada's Svapna-samadhi**

After the disappearance of Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur and Srila Gaura Kisora Das Babaji Maharaj, the grief-stricken Srila Prabhupada stayed in Mayapur in the place called Vraja-pattana (now a part of the Chaitanya Math grounds). He

wondered, “How can I fulfill the desires of my gurus by preaching the pure doctrine of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu throughout the world. Where will I find the power to do so? I have no followers to help me, no money to speak of, I have no great learning by which I can enchant the mundane. In short, I have no assets of any kind which qualify me to perform this difficult task. It seems that I will not be able to fulfill the desires of my gurus.”

Srila Prabhupada went into an apparent state of deep depression, thinking that it would be impossible for him to continue the preaching mission. His work on writing a commentary on Rupa Goswami’s *Upadesamṛta* came to a halt after only eight verses.

One night, however, Prabhupada had a dream-like vision in which he saw all the members of the Pancha Tattva, being led by Mahaprabhu in sankirtan, dancing toward his own birthplace at the Yoga-piṭha in Mayapur, approaching the Naṭamandira from the east. They were followed by the Six Goswamis and by Vaishnava Sarvabhauma Jagannath Das Babaji, Bhaktivinoda Thakur, Gaura Kisora Das Babaji and other members of the disciplic succession, all appearing in effulgent, divine forms. They consoled Prabhupada, saying, “Why are you worrying? Get the task of preaching pure devotion underway. Preach Mahaprabhu’s message everywhere: spread service to Gaura-dham (Mahaprabhu’s abode), Gaura-nama (his name), and Gaura-kama (his desire or work). All of us are at the ready to support you at every turn. We will help you at every moment in your efforts to preach pure devotional service. Countless people, unlimited wealth and extraordinary scholarship are all standing in wait for you to call for them. Whenever you need anything at all, it will come to you to be engaged in the service of the preaching mission. Simply go forward to preach the message of love of God as given by Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, giving it your total effort. No worldly force will be able to disrupt this effort. We are with you always.”

The following morning, Srila Prabhupada came and told Paramananda Prabhu and some other faithful followers about his dream. From that day onward, he displayed an enthusiasm without limit for the worldwide preaching of Mahaprabhu’s message. He completed his *Anuvṛtti* of the *Upadesamṛta*, and started making great efforts to publish books on bhakti. These efforts have borne fruit inasmuch as those seeking service to the divine throughout India have been washed up in the flood of pure devotional preaching he started. The flood has even begun to inundate the West. It thus seems to me that Srila Prabhupada is

constantly repeating Mahāprabhu’s instructions to all of us:

yare dekho tare kaho kṛṣṇa upadesa |  
amara ajnaya guru hana taro ei desa ||  
ihate na badhibe viṣaya taraṅga |  
punarapi ei ṭhani pabe mora saṅga ||

Instruct whomever you see in the religion of Krishna. Become a spiritual master on my order and deliver everyone in this land. Do this and you will never again be entangled in the waves of materialistic life. Indeed, you will have my company again, here in this very place.” (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.7.128-9)

## **Srila Saccidananda Bhaktivinoda Thakur**

namo bhaktivinodaya saccidananda-murtaye |  
gaura-sakti-svarupaya rupanuga-varaya te ||

I offer my obeisances to you, O Bhaktivinoda, the form of eternity, knowledge and bliss, the incarnation of Gaura’s potency and the best of the followers of Rupa Goswami.

## **Bhaktivinoda’s spiritual identity**

Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur's transcendental identity is revealed to the members of his spiritual family. He is the best of the followers of Rupa Manjari who is the leader of Lalita Sakhi's entourage. Lalita Sakhi is the foremost of Radharani's eight girlfriends. In various places in his own writings, Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur has indicated this divine identity:

yugala-sevaya, sri-rasa-maṇḍale, niyukta kara amay |

lalita-sakhira, ayogya-kiṅkari, vinoda dhariche pay ||

Bhaktivinoda holds your feet and asks you to engage this unworthy servant of Lalita Sakhi in the service of the Divine Couple while they are performing the rasa-lila. (Kalyaṇa-kalpataru)

In the song Siddhi-lalasa in his Gita-mala, also, Bhaktivinoda Thakur gives his eternal spiritual identity as Kamala Manjari, the servant of Sri Rupa Manjari. Her kunja is in the bower of Lalita, Vrajananda-sukhada-kunja, where she sets the standard of worship to the Divine Couple.

varaṇe taṛit, vasa taravali, kamala-manjari nama |

saṇe baro varṣa, vayas satata, svananda-sukhada dhama ||

My bodily hue is like that of lightning and I wear a sari the colour of a clear night sky sprinkled with stars. I am twelve and a half years old and I live in Svananda-sukhada-kunja.

### **The need for Bhaktivinoda's appearance**

After the disappearance of Sri Krishna Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, Svarupa

Damodar, Ramananda Raya and the Six Goswamis, Srinivas Acharya, Narottama Das and Shyamananda Prabhu, a dark age descended on the world of Gaudiya Vaiṣṇavism. Those unable to understand the transcendental purity of Mahaprabhu's religion of love started numerous heretical sects or apasampradayas. Totarama Das Babaji named thirteen such heretical sects:

aul, baul, kartabhaja, neṛa, daravesa, sain |

sahajiya, sakhibheki, smarta, jata-gosani |

atibari, cuṛadhari, gauranga-nagari |

tota kahe ei teror saṅga nahi kari ||

Educated upper class Bengali society was shocked and disgusted by the practices of these heretical sects and came to identify Mahaprabhu's religion with the lower classes, the uneducated and immoral. People of the gentle classes thus had no understanding or faith in Mahaprabhu's true religion. The most munificent incarnation Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu took pity on these bewildered persons and in order to reclaim them for his path of divine love sent his eternal associate Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur into this world. Possessed of superhuman prowess, the Thakur wrote more than a hundred books in several different languages with the goal of defeating all the unorthodox views opposed to the true doctrines of Mahaprabhu's religion. The result was that many members of discerning society and others from all over the world came to recognize the unequalled value of Mahaprabhu's teachings. The founder of the Chaitanya Math and the worldwide Gaudiya Maths, Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur, based his mission on the books and teachings given by Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur and set into motion the fulfilment of Mahaprabhu's message, found in the Chaitanya Bhagavat:

pr̥thivite paryanta ache jata desa-grama |

sarvatra sancara ha+ibeka mora nama ||



My name will pervade every village and country in the world. (Chaitanya Bhagavat 3.4.126)

Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur thus made an unequalled contribution to the ultimate, spiritual welfare of humankind. Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur wrote in his preface to the Jaiva-dharma: “Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur is an extremely dear associate of Sri Chaitanya Candra. In the course of time, when those who preached the desires of Chaitanya Deva had left this world to enter the Lord’s eternal pastimes, the sky over Bengal slowly darkened, covered by the thick clouds of sensual enjoyment and false renunciation. The sky was covered and the world was bereft of the rays of light coming from the sankirtan propagated by Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. One by one, the sun, the moon and the unlimited stars of that sky faded from view, leaving only the occasional flash of lightning to disrupt the unending darkness of ignorance. Almost 350 years after the appearance of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur came to illuminate the Gaudiya sky.

All the great virtues are present in the body of a Vaishnava. The good qualities of Krishna gradually develop in his devotees. All these transcendental qualities are the characteristics of pure Vaishnavas, and they cannot be fully explained, but I shall try to point out some of the most important. Devotees are always merciful; they are not bellicose. They are truthful, equal to all, faultless, generous, mild and clean. They are without material possessions, and they work for the welfare of all. They are peaceful, surrendered to Krishna and desireless. They are meek, resolute, and completely control the six character flaws of lust, anger, greed and so forth. They eat only as much as required and are prudent, respectful, and free from false prestige. They are grave, sympathetic, friendly, poetic, expert and silent. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.22.75-80)

“All these devotee qualities were perfectly displayed by Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur throughout his life of pure devotion. The ocean of compassion, Sri Gaurahari, displayed this merciful nature to the conditioned souls in nine different ways. The same kind of distribution of mercy is seen in the life and work of Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur.”

## **The sampradâya's debt to Bhaktivinoda Thakur**

Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur is the root of the daily activities in the Chaitanya Math, the Gaudiya Math, the Chaitanya Gaudiya Math, the Gaudiya Missions, etc. The Gaudiya Math institutions cannot be separated from Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur. These institutions are entirely indebted to his sublime contributions.

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur has written, “Devotees in the line of Srila Rupa Goswami do not preach faith in their own powers, but rather direct attention to the source of their spiritual strength. We also do everything for the sake of Sri Krishna Chaitanya, Sri Rupa, Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur and our divine spiritual master.” (From Patravali, Srila Prabhupada's letters, vol. 3, p. 89.)

Devotees of the Brahma-Madhva-Sarasvata-Gaudiya sampradaya pay their respects daily to Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur as follows:

suddha-bhakti-pracarasya mulibhuta ihottamaḥ |

sri-bhaktivinodo devas tat-priyatvena visrutaḥ ||

Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur is a transcendental personality who is the root of the preaching movement of pure devotion. He is renowned as one who is dear to Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu.

## **Hymns to Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur**

Two of Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur's most prominent disciples, His Grace Bhaktirakṣaka Sridhara Deva Goswami and His Grace Bhaktivicara Yayabara Maharaj wrote hymns in praise of Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur, the former in Sanskrit, the latter in Bengali. These have been given

below:

vande bhaktivinodaṁ sri-gaurasakti-Svarupakam |  
bhakti-sastra-jna-samrajaṁ radha-rasa-sudhanidhim ||

I bow to Sri Thakur Bhaktivinoda, Mahaprabhu's divine energies personified. He is the emperor of Vaishnava scholars and possesses the ambrosial treasure of Sri Radha's sacred rapture.

Bhaktivinoda prabhu, daya koro more  
tava kṛpa bale pai sri-prabhupadere |  
bhakti-siddhanta sarasvati prabhupada  
jagate aniya dile kariya prasada |  
sarasvati kṛṣṇa-priya, kṛṣṇa-bhakti taṇra hiya  
vinodera sei se vaibhava |  
ei gitera bhavartha, prabhupada para-arthā  
ebe mora kari anubhava ||

O Bhaktivinoda Prabhu, be merciful to me, for by your blessings I can attain Srila Prabhupada, Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati. Out of compassion for the world, you brought him whose heart is filled with devotion to Krishna and who is dear to Krishna. This is the glory of Bhaktivinoda Thakur. The purpose of this song is to find complete dedication to Srila Prabhupada and this is what we now experience.

sri-caitanya-janma-sthana sri-mayapura |  
tomara prcare ebe janila saṁsara ||  
sikṣamṛta, jaiva-dharma, adi grantha sata |  
sajjana-toṣaṇi-patri sarva-samadṛta ||  
ei saba grantha-patri kariya pracara |  
lupta-praya suddha-bhakti karile uddhara ||  
jivere janale tumi hao kṛṣṇa-dasa |  
kṛṣṇa bhajo kṛṣṇa cinto chaṛi anya asa ||  
kṛṣṇa-dasye jiva saba parananda pay |  
sakala vipad ha'te mukta haye jay ||

The whole world has learned that Chaitanya's birthplace is in Mayapur thanks to your preaching efforts. Your hundred books such as Sri-Chaitanya-Sikṣamṛta, Jaiva Dharma, etc., and your magazine, Sajjana-toṣaṇi are valued by all. You preached these books and magazines and by so doing were able to restore the religion of pure devotion which had almost been lost. You told the fallen souls that they were in truth servants of Krishna and you told them to worship Krishna, to think of Krishna and to give up all other ambition. Through service to Krishna, the living being finds full happiness in life and freedom from all danger.

apani acari dharma sikhale sabare |  
grhe kimba dhame thaki bhajaha kṛṣṇere ||  
gadadhara-gaurahari-seva prakasile |

sri-radha-madhava-rupe tañdera dekhile ||  
gosvami-gaṇera grantha vicara kariya |  
susiddhanta sikhayeche pramaṇadi diya ||  
taha paṛi suni loka akṛṣṭa ha+ila |  
jaga-bhari tava nama gahite lagila ||  
vyasera abhinna tumi puraṇa prakasa |  
sukḥhinna prabhupada sri-dayita-dasa ||

You taught everyone by your own example that they should worship Krishna whether they are living as a householder or residing in the dham. You consecrated deities of Gadadhara-Gauranga, seeing Radha and Madhava in them. You studied the scriptures of the Goswamis and preached the pure doctrines that you found there with the appropriate evidence. Those who heard and read these doctrines were attracted and began to sing your glories throughout the world. You are like Vyasadeva who published the puraṇas, and Srila Prabhupada, Dayita Das, your son, is like Sukadeva.

vaiṣṇavera jata guṇa achaye granthete |  
sakala prakasa haila tomara dehete ||  
sri-gaura-maṇḍala majhe sri-biranagar |  
tava avirbhava sthana sarva-subhaṅkara ||  
vandi ami nata-sire sei puṇya-kṣetra |  
mastake dharṇa kari se dhuli pavitra ||  
tomara kṛpaya isodyane sthana pai |

bhagavata-maṭhe basi tava nama gai ||

tomara dasanudasa yati yayabara |

prarthana karaye dhama-vasa nirantara ||

All the Vaishnava qualities described in the books are manifest in your body. You appeared in Gaura-maṇḍala-bhumi, in the village of Birnagar, a place which is auspicious for all. I worship that holy spot with my head bowed low, taking its holy dust on my head. By your mercy, I have found a place in Ishodyan, the divine garden of Mayapur, and here in the Bhagavata Math, I glorify your name. The servant of your servants, the sannyasi Yayabara, prays to you to grant him eternal life in the Holy Dhama.

### **Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur's family history**

Just as the Supreme Lord Sri Krishna's highest perfection is in his human activities in a human form, so similarly his eternal associates also act in human-like ways when they descend to the worldly platform for the benefit of the fallen living entities. Even though they appear to be ordinary human beings, they are in fact never touched by the illusory nature and always remain transcendental to it. They may be situated in householder life, but they are never entangled in material sensual desires like an ordinary conditioned soul because of their deep attachment and love for the Lord. They are simply engaged in a pastime whereby they imitate the activities of the rest of mankind for the sake of exchanging with them for the purposes of benefitting them. Those who have surrendered with sincerity to Vishnu and the Vaishnavas are able to recognize the non-material character of these personalities.

The King Adisura invited Brahmins and other upper class Hindus to Bengal, amongst whom was the kayastha Purushottam. His seventh and eighth generation descendants were Sri Vinayaka and Narayan who became government ministers. The fifteenth generation descendant was Mahaprabhu's

contemporary, Raja Kṛṣṇananda Datta. He was a devotee of Krishna and Nityananda Prabhu came to stay in his home with his entourage and bestowed profuse blessings on him. Descendents of Kṛṣṇananda Datta include Govindasaraṇa Datta who founded the village of Govindapura. Kalighaṭa, Sutanuṭi and Govindapura are the three villages which later became Calcutta.

Govindasaraṇa Datta's grandson was Ramachandra. His grandson was Madana Mohana Datta, who donated Calcutta's Heduwā Pukur to the municipality for public use. He also spent a great deal of his personal wealth in 1774 to build steps at Gaya's Pretasila Tirtha and the Candranatha mountain. Madana Mohana Datta's grandson was Rajavallabha Datta, whose son Anandacandra Datta was very religious and detached from material life. Anandacandra married Jaganmohini Devi, the daughter of the celebrated zamindar of Ula village in Nadia district, Ishvaracandra Mustauṭi.

Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur accepted Anandacandra Datta and Jaganmohini Devi as his parents and appeared in Ula-Birnagar in the home of his maternal grandfather. It was the 352nd year after the birth of Chaitanya Mahāprabhu, Sunday, Sept. 2, 1838; the tithi was Sukla Trayodasi of Bhādra. His parents gave him the name Kedaranatha.

## **Bhaktivinoda Thakur's childhood**

Bhaktivinoda composed his first poem when he was only two years old. This extraordinary display of talent gave an indication of his future vocation and the transcendental devotional songs he would write later in his life. Songs full of devotion for the Lord and sacred sentiment like his are not the result of any worldly scholarship or creativity, but are self-manifested in the eternally perfect associate of the Lord. The words of the residents of Vaikuntha are all not different from the object of their speech, the Supreme Lord. They can in no way be compared to any mundane sound vibration. Every word used by the Thakur is divine ambrosia which awakens the mood of love for the Lord and is full of the flavors of devotional sentiment.

At only six, had learned all the details of the historical epics, Mahābhārata

and Ramayana. Is an ordinary six-year old capable of such a feat? Without divine mercy, it is impossible to understand the basis of all the devotional scriptures. They are not accessible to mere scholarship. The meaning of the scriptures was revealed in the heart of the Thakur on its own. Thus, there is a basic difference between the explanations of scripture given by him and those derived from a mundane scholarly analysis.

Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur began researching astrological texts when he was nine years old, but according to his autobiography, he began inquiring into spiritual truth at the age of ten. Though he was naturally fixed in spiritual truth at every moment, he displayed this pastimes in order to demonstrate the special character of human life. He began to mix with people in order to find out what preoccupied people and what they thought about. With his sweet words and respectful attitude, he won over all those whom he encountered. Whenever he pointed out the flaws of anyone's argument, they would not feel angry or disappointed but rather joy. This was not within the capacity of an ordinary restless boy of ten years.

The following is Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur's account of several childhood events from his autobiography: "I would go whenever a festival was held at someone's house. There were often such religious festivals at the Brahmachari's house. There was a nice temple on the outside, and inside a flower garden and a fire-sacrifice altar. The Brahmachari worshiped according to the Tantrik cult. He kept a human skull in a small, hidden room. Some people said that if you gave water and milk to a human skull, it will smile. I took the skull down and gave it water, but I saw no smile.

"Nearby there was also an astrologer's house where I would listen to singing performances. One old carpenter was engaged to paint backdrops for the image during the Durga puja. I sat near him while he worked and asked him many questions, which he always answered. I asked, 'When does the spirit of the god enter into the image?' The carpenter answered, 'When I paint its eyes, the god will come and take up residence in the image.' The day that he was actually going to paint the deity's eyes, I eagerly came but I never saw the god actually appear. I said, 'Goloka Pal made this image. He first tied bundles of straw and then covered it with clay. You covered it with chalk and then painted it. There is no god anywhere in this statue at all, is there?' The old carpenter then said, 'When the Brahmins consecrate the deity then the god incarnates and enters the form.' I observed this consecration ceremony carefully, but I was never able to



see any divine manifestation. I thought that the carpenter was a fairly wise fellow and so I went to his house and asked him to explain again. He then said to me, 'I have no faith in this worship of idols. My belief is that the Brahmins simply use this as a means of deception for taking money from gullible people.' The carpenter's words brought me great pleasure and I asked him to tell me something about the Supreme Lord. He said, 'Say what you will, I believe in nothing other than the one Supreme Lord, Paramesvara. The gods and goddesses are all imaginary. I worship the one God every day.' These words of the old man gave me faith.

"I became even more inquisitive. The Muslim footman Golam Khan used to guard the treasury. Once in response to my questions, he said, 'God's name is Khoda. At one time he was alone and there was no one and nothing but him. Then he took the dirt from his body and made a pancake out of it which he threw into the single ocean. The upper part of the pancake became the sky and the lower part became the earth. He then created humankind, starting with Adam and Eve. We are all the descendants of Adam and Eve.' After hearing this myth, I asked him, 'Who do you think Rama is?' He said, 'Rama and Rahim are one. That is Khoda.' Then I learned from him about a spell which chases ghosts. Golam Khan said, 'Ghosts are the descendants of Satan. They are afraid of the name of Rahim.' These teachings gave me great pleasure.

"My maternal uncle Parasurama Mustaufi was studying law at that time. At first, he had some faith in God, but later dismissed the idea. While he was a believer, my other uncles Raghu and Nasu were his followers. When he stopped believing in the personal god, he started calling Rama Mohana Raya his guru. I was very troubled because, being just an ignorant child, I was uncomfortable having a difference of opinion with him. Uncle Parasurama said, 'Everything in the world is a product of natural forces. There is no such thing as a God outside of nature.' When I heard this, I went to see some Bhattacharya in his school and asked him to respond to it. His answers caused me to become more confused. Though I was confused, I never gave up chanting the name of Rama."

From all these stories, we can draw the lesson that rather than entering into the confusing business of establishing exact doctrines of the relation of the divine and the creation, one should chant the Holy Name with faith. At one point, Mahaprabhu also bound his books in their cloth wrappers and told his students to simply chant the Holy Name. Dogmatic truths will all be revealed through the Holy Name. Dogmatic spiritual truth is not arrived at through mental

speculation; one is bound to arrive at a mistaken conception of God.

### **Kedaranatha's marriage**

When Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur was only eleven years old, his father died. According to the custom prevalent at that time, Kedaranatha's mother arranged for her twelve-year-old son to be married to a five-year-old from nearby Ranaghat. Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur has the following to say about his marriage: "It was just like a doll's play-marriage. Because I would not be able to stay alone at my in-laws' house, my parents sent my nanny to accompany me." Though the Thakur had direct perception of human entanglement, he did nothing to protest the defects of the marriage system of the period.

### **Studies**

At six years of age, Kedaranatha went to study Sanskrit at the Tola of Vidyavacaspati. Then at the age of seven, his grandfather sent him to study at Krishnagar College. At that time, the college principal's name was Captain D. L. Richardson and the principle native professor was Ramtanu Lahiri. The next year, an English-language school was established in Ula in which Kedaranatha was enrolled. While studying at Krishnagar College, one of his fellow students was the King of Koochbihar, who was still a child.

When his maternal grandfather died, he and his mother came to live in Calcutta at the family home at the corner of Beadon Street and Hedua in Bhawanipur. He recommenced his studies at the Hindu Charitable Trust School. After four years there, he was admitted to the Hindu School in 1856.

Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur was one of Ishvaracandra Vidyasagara's first students, whom he held in great affection. One day, Bhaktivinoda visited the great scholar in his house in Calcutta. Vidyasagara Mahasaya said to him, "Since

none of us has ever seen God, it is best that we not talk about him.” Though he was his student, Bhaktivinoda Thakur did not refrain from speaking the truth to the venerated teacher. He asked, “Pandit Mahasaya, why then did you write in your [children’s] book Bodhodaya that God is formless and pure consciousness. If you haven’t seen God, then why have you written this about him? God is omnipotent. Don’t you think that if he can do anything, that he has the power to maintain a form? The Supreme Lord is my eternal master, and I am his eternal servant. The natural affection that we have for the Supreme Lord is called bhakti, brahma-vidya or para-vidya in the Veda. This is real knowledge, the realization of which means that there is no shortage of any knowledge.”

Those who are always engaged in a direct relationship with the absolute truth, the Supreme Lord, are immediately able to recognize any statement which goes contrary to the spiritual truth. There is a complete difference between knowledge which has been garnered from the reading of books and the knowledge which arises from the epiphany of the self-effulgent truth.

Calcutta University was founded in 1856 and entrance exams held for the first time. Amongst Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur’s fellow students were Satyendranath and Ganendranath Tagore, Tarak Nath Palit and Naragopal Mitra. Principal Clint, Reverend Duff, George Thompson, and Keshab Chandra Sen were attracted by the young man’s mastery of the English language and literature. Toward the end of 1856, Kedaranatha published an English poem, The Poriade, which was well-received in educated circles in Calcutta. All the Thakur’s English poems were published in the paper, Library (Literary) Gazette. He delivered a lecture to the British Indian Society in 1856 on the evolution of matter which was much applauded.

During this time, the Thakur also studied the Brahma Dharma, Christianity, the Bible and Qur’an and many other religious traditions and books. He considered Christianity superior to the Brahma religion because of its acceptance of God’s eternal personality. In 1857, the Sepoy Mutiny broke out. Kedaranatha spent some of this time travelling and lecturing.

## **The prediction of grandfather Krishnavallabha**

In 1858, Kedaranatha went to Nilachala. On the way back to Calcutta, he stopped at Chutigram, where his grandfather Krishnavallabha Datta was living. His grandfather said prophetically that Kedaranatha would be a great Vaishnava. Immediately upon making this prediction, his life airs passed out through the top of his head. Kedaranatha remained there for a few more days before continuing through Cuttack, Bhadrak, and Midnapore to Calcutta.

### **The title Bhaktivinoda**

On Ishvara Candra Vidyasagara's recommendation, Kedaranatha Datta took a job teaching at the Cuttack Government Secondary School and shortly thereafter, the headmaster's position at a school in Bhadrak in 1860. During this time, he wrote a book on the various religious institutions of Orissa, Maths of Orissa, which Sir William Hunter made much use of as a reference work in his Orissa. He also wrote a work named Sri-Caitanya-Gita under the pen name Saccidananda Premalaṅkara. He was given the title Bhaktivinoda by the Sri Gaudiya Goswami Saṅgha on the 400th anniversary of Mahaprabhu's appearance (1885). From this time on, Kedaranatha Datta was known in Vaishnava society as Sri Saccidananda Bhaktivinoda Thakur.

### **Travels and Preaching**

The Thakur also taught at a school in Midnapore. One day a follower of the Brahmo religion, Rama Narayan Basu, heard him speak at literary society meeting on the truth of religion and was deeply affected. During his time in Midnapore, the Thakur's first wife died and he married for a second time, to Bhagavati Devi. From Midnapore, he went to Burdwan to preach. While there, he published an English book, Our Wants, in 1863. He was involved in the arguments between the Brahmo Samaj and Christians and tried to mediate between the two religions. In two lectures he showed the problems with both groups' positions. While in Burdwan, he started a group called the Bhratṛ-

samaja. At one of the meetings of this group, he gave a learned speech on the soul which attracted the attention of a certain Mr. Heiley.

From Burdwan, the Thakur went to Chuadanga and Ranaghat before going to live temporarily in Chapra in Bihar. While living there, he made his first visit to Vrindavan, travelling by train through Kasi, Mirzapur, Prayag, Agra, etc. While in Chapra, the Thakur studied Urdu and Persian and mastered these languages. He also gave a speech on Gautama while there.

From Chapra, he went to Purniya and then, in 1868, to Dinajpur where he was engaged as Deputy Magistrate. In Dinajpur, he found that there was a dispute between Hindus and Brahmos in which he intervened, giving a speech on the Bhagavat: Its Philosophy, Its Ethics and Its Theology.

In June of 1868, he visited Rupa and Sanatan's home in Ramakeli as well as Rajmahal, etc. Thereafter he returned to Calcutta, where he undertook research to find copies of Chaitanya-caritamṛta and Srimad Bhagavatam. After much work, he finally found copies at the Baṭa Tala publishing house. With these valuable editions, he went to Purushottam Dhama. He was engaged as a director of the temple to oversee its management. He lived in Puri continuously for over five years, from 1869-1874.

### **Punishing Biṣikiṣaṇa for deception**

In Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur's life we find that he personified the description of a Vaishnava as one who is more gentle than a rose, yet more terrible than the thunderbolt. Although he was generally kind and sympathetic, he gave no quarter to dishonesty in the name of religion. One event in his life which took place while he was in Orissa is an indication of this. In 1871, a member of the Khandait caste and the Atibari sect named Biṣikiṣaṇa who had gained some mystic powers through yogic practices proclaimed himself to be an incarnation of Mahaviṣṇu. He was staying with his acolytes at the edge of the jungle near the town of Bhuvanesvara. He announced that on the 14th of Chaitra, he would reveal a four-armed form and destroy all the foreigners, restoring the true religion. His announcement was written in Orissan verse:

banere achi biṣakiṣaṇa

guptare achi na jana+i ana |

tera minare arambhiba raṇa,

caturbhuja hoi nasiba mleccha-gaṇa !

In the forest am I hiding and no one else knows me. But on the 13th of Mina I will begin the war. Taking on a four-armed form, I will destroy the Mlecchas.

Through his mystic powers, he had been able to cure incurable diseases and these powers had won for him a large following. One day he announced that on the full-moon day he would perform the rasa-lila and invited the girls of a nearby village to come and join him. The Chaudhuris of the Bṛṅgara clan found that he had polluted their womenfolk and went to complain en masse to the district commissioner, Ravenshaw. The Commissioner gave the task of investigating the matter to Bhaktivinoda Thakur, who went personally into the jungle to meet with Biṣakiṣaṇa. Biṣakiṣaṇa told Bhaktivinoda that he was the living Mahaviṣṇu and that Jagannath Deva was nothing but a lifeless wooden statue. He tried in various ways to flatter the Thakur and to win him over. When he saw that Biṣakiṣaṇa had no intention of stopping his efforts to deceive the people, Bhaktivinoda had him arrested and brought back to Puri.

The Thakur proceeded to investigate the background of Biṣakiṣaṇa by going to many villages and Buddhist viharas in the Khandagiri area of Puri district. After accumulating a mass of evidence showing the extent to which this yogi was cheating people, he had him brought to court. While the case was being heard, the yogi used his mystic power to cause Bhaktivinoda and his family to be attacked by various illnesses, in an effort to intimidate him, but without success. The Thakur was determined to see Biṣakiṣaṇa punished for conspiracy to rebellion and gave him a sentence of one and a half years. Biṣakiṣaṇa went for 21 days without food or drink and then left his body.

In the months which followed, another rascal in Jajpur proclaimed himself to be the incarnation of Brahma, while someone else in Khurda said that he was

a manifestation of Balaram. Bhaktivinoda Thakur quickly thwarted their efforts to cheat the populace.

### **Other activities of the Thakur in Puri**

While living in Puri, Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur took the opportunity to study the Bhagavat, the Six Sandarbhas of Jiva Goswami, the Govinda-bhaṣya, Siddhanta-ratnam, Prameya-ratnavali, etc., of Baladeva Vidyabhuṣaṇa. He also studied Rupa Goswami's Bhakti-rasamṛta-sindhu in great detail. By making a display of intense study, he demonstrated the necessity of cultivating an understanding of the scriptures in order to learn the truths about pure devotion contained therein. Mahaprabhu indicated that one of the five principle limbs of devotional service is hearing the Bhagavat. Jiva Goswami indicated that this is the best of all devotional activities. In order to proclaim this same truth, Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur founded a regular group for discussion of the Bhagavat, Bhagavata Saṁsat which was held in the Jagannath-vallabha gardens in Puri.

Many of the leading Vaishnavas in Puri such as Nityananda Das, Paramananda Das, Narayan Das Mahanta, Harihara Das Mahanta of Uttara Parsva were attracted to hearing the Bhagavat from his lips. Just as Mahaprabhu performed the pastime of hearing Bhagavat from Srila Gadadhara Pandit Goswami, Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur also listened to discourses given by Sri Gopinath Pandit. A certain renounced Vaishnava, Raghunath Das Babaji of Hati Akhara, objected to the Thakur's speaking on Bhagavat and was attacked by disease. After Jagannath appeared to him in a dream and ordered him, he went and begged Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur for forgiveness, after which he was cured.

When the Thakur went to the Jagannath Temple, he did not sit in the so-called Mukti-maṇḍapa, where Mayavadi scholars discussed their philosophy. He would sit by the Lakshmi temple where Mahaprabhu's footprints are enshrined and discussed devotional doctrines there. Many of the Mayavadis were attracted by his discourses and soon the place became known as the Bhakti-maṇḍapa or the Bhakti-praṅgaṇa.

During this time, Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur studied Krishnadas Kaviraj

Goswami's Chaitanya Charitamrita, Narahari Chakravarti's Bhakti-ratnakara, but he did not accept Jayananda's Chaitanya-maṅgala as being authoritative. He associated with a siddha Vaishnava named Svarupa Das Babaji, discussing scripture with him. He also wrote the Sanskrit work, Datta-kaustubha and began writing the Sanskrit verses of Sri-kṛṣṇa-saṁhita.

## **The birth of Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati**

A wealthy family in Puri had leased land along the Grand Road from the Dakṣiṇa Parsva Math and build a house on it. Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur and his family resided in this building, which is not far from the Jagannath temple, next to the Narayan Chata. This house was reclaimed in 1974 by His Grace Bhakti Dayita Madhava Goswami Maharaj and now houses a Chaitanya Gaudiya Math with a beautiful temple building.

At 3:30 on Friday, February 6, 1874, on the Krishna-pancami of Magh month, an effulgent and beautiful child was born to Bhagavati Devi in this home, while the Thakur and other family members sang the names of the Lord. Everyone was amazed to see that the child's umbilical cord was wrapped around his body like a sacred thread. He was named after the divine energy of Jagannath Deva, Vimala Devi, as Bimala Prasad (Vimala-prasada). His first solid food was Jagannath's maha prasada. When he grew up, this child became the founder of the Chaitanya Math and the worldwide Gaudiya Maths, Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur Prabhupada.

Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur was Jagannath Deva's own man. It was by his arrangement that he was brought to Puri and put in charge of the temple's management. After the birth of Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur, the preaching of Mahaprabhu's message spread over the entire planet. This gave meaning to the words written by Vyasadeva in the Padma-Purāṇa, hy utkale puruṣottamat, "out of Purushottam in Orissa."

Ten months after the child's birth, Bhaktivinoda Thakur returned to Bengal with his family, this time going to Ranaghat. They travelled overland by palanquin.



## **Bhaktivinoda's unequalled contribution**

Vedavyasa and the scriptures he wrote are the foundation of all those who claim to follow the Sanatan Dharma. He himself practiced and preached the means by which humankind can attain the supreme peace. Vedavyasa compiled and divided the Veda, wrote the eighteen purāṇas and the Mahabharata including the Bhagavad-gita, but remained unsatisfied. Finally, while at Badarikasrama, Narada Muni instructed him to glorify the activities of Sri Krishna in order to attain his pleasure. After writing the twelve cantos of the Srimad Bhagavatam, Vedavyasa finally found the peace he had been looking for. Mahaprabhu Sri Chaitanya preached the Bhagavat religion which is found in this text. After the disappearance of Mahaprabhu and his associates, however, the path of pure devotion became covered with thorns until Bhaktivinoda Thakur appeared to write many books and to preach the pure doctrine of devotional service to Krishna. Through his tireless efforts, all the heretical doctrines were shown to be empty, the path of supreme auspiciousness and compassion was shown to all the world. These efforts can only be said to constitute an unequalled and certainly unsurpassed contribution. Without being empowered by Krishna himself, the message of pure devotion cannot be spread. Such a display of empowerment could not be possible were he not a direct associate of Gauranga Mahaprabhu, Sri Krishna.

Externally he was a householder with family obligations, a government servant engaged in the administrative service, but despite these responsibilities he was still able to write over a hundred books in several different languages. One cannot fail to be impressed by this monumental achievement. Every word of his writing is scripture; every word awakens the spirit of devotion to him who is beyond the grasp of the material senses and mind. Mundane scholars would never be able to achieve the kind of synthesis that he did. His every thought was perfectly reasonable and never far-fetched. His writings are a permanent display of compassion to the fallen souls. His Grace Bhakti Dayita Madhava Maharaj used to say to his disciples, “You need do nothing else other than translate Bhaktivinoda Thakur’s books into the world’s various languages and you will have done the greatest act of welfare for the people of the world.” In fact, everything that is done in the Gaudiya Maths throughout the world has come

from Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur.

### **Bhaktivinoda's travels and preaching activities**

After the birth of Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur, Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur returned to Bengal. From then on he engaged in preaching the doctrine of pure devotional service, travelling throughout India. We will give a brief summary here of all the places he visited during the period between 1877 and 1910, whether for the sake of pilgrimage or for preaching. He went to Amta in the Uluberiya subdivision, to Abhiram Thakur's Sripaṭa in Khanakula Krishnanagara, Syamapura, Bhadrak in Orissa, Nārail in Jessore district, Calcutta, Prayag, Vrindavan (where he met Jagannath Das Babaji for the first time), Sri Radha Kund, Sri Govardhana (where he broke up the Kanjhara gang of dacoits who were harrassing pilgrims to the Dhama), Mathura, Lucknow, Faiyedabad, Goptara Ghaṭ, Ayodhya and Benares.

He then returned to Calcutta where in 1882 he started construction on Bhakti Bhavana at 181 Maniktola Street. While digging the foundations for the building, a murti of Kurmadeva was found. Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur gave this deity to Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur and taught him how to worship it. He also visited Mayapur for the first time.

He was engaged as Deputy Collector in the Barasat subdivision. Then he was transferred to Srirampura (1884) Vaidyanatha, Bakipura, and Gaya, where he saw the steps on Pretasila constructed by his great-grandfather, Madana Mohana Datta. He returned to Nārail, Barasat, Memari, Kulinagrama, Byāṇḍel, and Saptagram. In Kulinagrama he lectured on the Holy Name, distinguishing between the pure name, namabhasa and namaparadha. There he also gave Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur initiation in the Holy Name and the Nrisingha mantra.

In Calcutta in 1885, he established the Chaitanya-yantra printing press. In 1886, he helped establish the Visva-Vaishnava-sabha at the Durga Maṇḍapa of Rama Gopal Basu in Krishnasimhera Gali off Bethune Road. There he gave lectures on Chaitanya Charitamrita and Bhakti-rasamṛta-sindhu. He met

Ramakrishna Paramahansa at this time and countered his impersonal philosophy and described the truth of pure devotion to him.

## **Discovery of Mahaprabhu's birthplace**

In 1887, he visited the most important Shiva-linga in Bengal at Tarakesvara where Shiva appeared to him in a dream and said, "You want to go to Vrindavan, but there is much work left to do in Nabadwip Dhama nearby. What have you done there?" Later that year, he was transferred to Krishnanagara. Then, while visiting Kuliya, the modern city of Nabadwip, he was standing on the roof of the Raṇira Dharmasala overlooking the Ganges. At about ten o'clock at night, he saw an illuminated building on the other side of the river. His son Kamala Prasada who was there with him also saw this light. On inquiry, they learned that this place was Ballaladighi. When he made inquiries from the elderly residents of Ballaladighi, they told him that this was the birthplace of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu.

Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur continued to research old maps and documents and was able to establish conclusively that Mahaprabhu's birthplace was indeed there.

He continued to maintain his Calcutta home where he installed a Giradhari Sila given him by Jagannath Das Babaji, but in 1888 purchased the property in Godrumadvipa known as Surabhi Kunja. While working at Krishnanagara he was also able to visit his birthplace at Ula.

In 1889, he was transferred to East Bengal in the Netrakona subdivision in Mymensingh District, whence he visited Narayan Ganj, Mymensingh city, the Garo Hills where he blessed the people of the Hajong tribe, and Gowalanda. Though he was able to visit Calcutta during this period, he was soon transferred to Tangail and then to Burdwan. He visited Shantipur, Kalna, Baghna Para, Kaigram, and Denur, the site of Vrindavan Das Thakur's Sripaṭa. During this time he visited Kuliya again where he met Jagannath Das Babaji at his bhajana-kuṭira. He had a concrete veranda built on this occasion (May, 1890). While in Burdwan, he also performed kirtan with the devotees of Amlajora

village and visited Gopalpura, Raniganj and Barakara.

In 1890, Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur was again transferred to Raniganj in East Bengal and then back to Dinajpur in 1891. When he visited Calcutta, he met Sisira Kumara Ghosh who considered him a guru, even calling him “the seventh Goswami”. Sisira Kumara Ghosh would come regularly to visit him at Bhakti Bhavan and at the Thakur’s direction, started chanting japa and wearing a tulasi mala around his neck. He was not able to accept the principles of Vaishnava behavior in their entirety, however.

During this period Bhaktivinoda also visited Midnapore (Medinipura), where he preached to Sitanatha Mahapatra and other devotees, Ghaṭal in Midnapore district and Kayapaṭa Badana Ganj in Hooghly district. From there he returned to Krishnanagar, staying once again in Surabhi Kunja. He arranged for some large assemblies to be called in Krishnanagara at which he spoke. Messrs. Mulrow, Revelshaw, and Butler were regular attendants.

At Amaljora on March 9, 1892, he participated in a Harivasara program at which Jagannath Das Babaji was present. From there he travelled to Vrindavan, stopping at Baksar (Bihar) and Prayag. He was in Vraja from March 21 to 29, during which time he managed to visit Bilvavana, Bhaṇḍiravana, Maṭhavana, Manasarovara, Mathura, Gokula, Madhuvana, Talavana, Kumudavana, Bahulavana, Radhakunḍa, Govardhana, etc. He then returned to Calcutta via Kanpur and Allahabad.

In Calcutta, he once again engaged in preaching the message of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu at Bhakti Bhavana, as well as continuing to hold assemblies at Krishnanagara. In Magh 1399 (February, 1893), he held a kirtan festival at Godrumadvipa at which Jagannath Das Babaji was the guest of honor. Later that spring, on the 20th of Phalguna (March, 1893), Jagannath Das indicated the exact spot where Mahaprabhu had first appeared in this world.

At this time, the Thakur had an argument with a certain member of a Goswami family who held that one of Mahaprabhu’s closest associates was a Sudra. Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur was very displeased when he heard this and warned him with the words:

vaiṣṇava-caritra, sarvada pavitra, jei ninde himsa kari |

bhaktivinoda, na sambhaṣe tare, thake sada mauna dhari ||

The character of a Vaishnava is always spotless. Bhaktivinoda will not talk to anyone who criticizes a Vaishnava out of spite, but always remains silent.

Also at about this time, Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur wrote down his guru-parampara and hung it on the outside of Bhakti Bhavan.

In January of 1894, Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur held another large meeting at the A.V. School in Krishnanagara. At this meeting it was decided that deities should be installed at Mahaprabhu's birthplace. At the same time, the Nabadwip Pracariṇi Sabha was formed to preach the newly discovered birthsite. Nafar Chandra Pal Bhaktibhuṣaṇa, the zamindar of Naṭudaha in Nadia district, was elected executive secretary of the of the Sabha. Dvarika Babu, Nafar Babu, and other members of the Sabha decided that a thatched cottage would be constructed on the site would house deities of Gaura and Vishnupriya. These deities were consecrated on Friday, March 21, 1894 (Chaitra 9, 1300 Bengali), on the Phalguni Purṇima, in the midst of a rousing kirtan during a lunar eclipse. For the maintenance of the deities, a committee was formed (Sri Mayapur Seva Samiti) which had many distinguished Vaishnavas as its members, including Syamalal Goswami, Sasibhuṣaṇa Goswami, Radhikanatha Goswami, Vipina Vihari Goswami, Mahamahopadhyaya Pandit Ajitanatha Nyayaratna, Mahendranatha Bhattacharya Vidyaranya, Satyajivana Lahiri, Raja Vanamali Raya Bahadura or Tarasa in Pabna district, Sisira Kumara Ghosh, Matilal a Ghosh, Yatindranatha Chaudhuri, Mahendranatha Majumdara, the advocate Kisorilala Sarkara, Nalinakṣa Datta, Kanailala De Bahadura, Deputy Magistrate Navina Candra Sena, and Jagaccandra Raya.

### **Bhaktivinoda spends some time in Puri**

On October 4, 1894, Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur retired from government service

and came to live permanently in Surabhi Kunja in Godrumadvipa where he once again gave discourses on the Vaishnava scriptures. Some time after the disappearance of Jagannath Das Babaji in February of 1896, he accepted the invitation of the independent Raja of Tiperrah (Tripura), Birchandra Devavarma Maṇikya Bahadura, to go to Agartola. He went there with Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati in July 1896 and gave discourses on pure devotional service which enchanted the Raja. Later in the same year, he took Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati to Kashiyang, then in 1898 to Benares and Prayag.

In 1899, Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur purchased the property on which Svananda Sukhada Kunja would be built. When the building was finished, he came to perform his bhajana there. Gaura Kisora Das Babaji would come there to hear the Thakur's Bhagavat lectures and it was here that Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur first met him. In 1900, Bhaktivinoda Thakur travelled with Bhaktisiddhanta through Balesvara, Remuna, Bhuvanesvara, and Sakṣi Gopal to Puri. Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur displayed a deep desire to engage in bhajana by the beach near Hari Das Thakur's samadhi and his father arranged with Puri's sub-registrar, Jagabandhu Paṭṭanayaka, for him to be given the service of the Giridhari asana at the Satasana Math. In March of 1901, they came to Puri again and in 1902 the construction of Bhakti-Kuṭi was begun. At this time the Raja of Cossimbazar, Maṇindra Candra Nandi took instruction in devotional service from the Thakur.

In 1903, Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati regularly read and gave discourses on Chaitanya Charitamrita to the Thakur at Bhakti Kuṭi. The famous Radhramaṇa Caraṇa Das Babaji came to visit Bhaktivinoda Thakur during this time and they discussed devotional doctrines. Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur found Caraṇa Das's activities and dogmas to be heterodox and showed how by reference to the scriptures. Later, after Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur had returned to Nabadwip, Caraṇa Das indicated his desire to participate in the Nabadwip-parikrama that the Thakur had inaugurated, but unfortunately left his body before he was able to do so.

## **The Thakur returns to Godrumadvipa**

In 1906, Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur gave a lengthy discourse on Mahaprabhu's teachings at the house of zamindar Yatindranatha Raya Chaudhuri in Ṭaki. On February 26, 1906, the Thakur came to Calcutta again and from there to Svarupa Ganj in Godrumadvipa where he engaged in his devotional activities at Svananda-sukhada-kunja. While there, a certain Tarakabrahma Goswami of Jessore came to him and asked him to accept the service of his Radha Madhava deities for Mahaprabhu's birthplace. Tarakabrahma Goswami also began to live there with his wife and family, but after a short time it became clear that his behavior was at odds with the standards expected of them and they were obliged to leave. On April 29, 1906, however, the Sri Dhama Pracariṇi Sabha decided to award an annual stipend of 500 rupees to the temple for the service of Sri Sri Radha Madhava.

In 1908, Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur took the dress of a renounced Vaishnava, that of a Bhagavata-paramahansa, in order to dedicate his life to the full relishing the sacred nectar of Radha and Govinda's intimate pastimes.

On March 25, 1910, which was Phalguni Purnima, Bhakti Pradipa Tirtha, at that time still a householder, visited Bhaktivinoda Thakur at Mayapur and five days later was given initiation by him at Godrumadvipa. Another disciple, Krishna Das Babaji, was living at Svananda-sukhada-kunja at that time.

Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur preached that the rules of the Daiva-varṇasrama dharma should always be followed. Thus, he upheld the directives of the Sat-kriya-sara-dipika in giving the sacred thread to Jagadisa Bhaktipradipa (who after taking sannyas from Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur became Bhaktipradipa Tirtha Maharaj), Sitanatha Mahapatra, Vasanta Kumara Ghosh, and Manmathanatha Raya.

In this connexion, it is worth examining the Thakur's following words: "The Varṇasrama dharma which is current in society is distinct from the transcendental religion of exclusive devotion to Krishna. The practice of Varṇasrama dharma on its own does not result in full surrender to the Lord. The ultimate instruction of the Bhagavad-gita is to discard all the principles related to the varṇas and asramas, in short all activities based on bodily identification, and to engage in a cultivation of devotional activities based on the natural emotional constitution of the soul, which is pure and without ulterior motive. Dedicated scholars such as Raghavacari have no understanding of this glorious characteristic of Gaudiya Vaiṣṇavism's concept of pure devotion."

## **Bhaktivinoda sends Bhaktisiddhanta to Balighai**

In 1910, while still at Svananda-sukhada Kunja, Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur was engaged in writing his Svaniyama-dvadasaka when suddenly he became extremely ill. Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur and other dear disciples and followers gathered there, afraid that he was about to enter the nitya-lila. Even in a state of extreme physical discomfort, however, his enthusiasm for preaching Lord Chaitanya's message was unabated. Though unable to walk, he indicated a desire to be taken from place to place on horseback so that he could continue to spread the teachings of Mahaprabhu.

Three years before the Thakur's disappearance, Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur approached his father and indicated to him that though he felt himself to be an unworthy servant, he vowed to take up the ultimate welfare work of defeating all the heterodox doctrines which went against pure devotional service. Bhaktivinoda Thakur's was delighted to hear his son's determination and when Gopivallabhapura's Sri Visvambharananda Deva Goswami invited him to participate in a conference in Balighai, Midnapore, he sent Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur and Suresacandra Mukhopadhyaya in his place. The conference, the theme of which was to establish orthodox doctrines in certain areas of theology, took place from Sept. 8-11, 1911. Many respected and well-reputed scholars of the sampradaya were present, including Madhusudana Goswami Sarvabhauma of the Radharamaṇa Ghera in Vrindavan.

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur gave a talk on the distinctions between a Vaishnava and a Brahmin, demonstrating clearly a great amount of research, which left the assembly of scholars enchanted and speechless. A year later, when Madhusudana Goswami visited Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur at the Bhakti Bhavan he enthusiastically proclaimed that Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur was his capable successor in protecting the Gaudiya sampradaya.

In 1913, Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati wrote a commentary on the Chaitanya Charitamrita meant to accompany the Amṛta-pravaha-bhaṣya written by Srila



Bhaktivinoda Thakur. He read several passages of this Anubhaṣya to the Thakur, giving him indescribable pleasure.

### **Bhaktivinoda Thakur's entry into the eternal pastimes**

A few days before his disappearance, Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur left Godrumadvipa to come to Bhakti Bhavan. On June 23, 1914, on the disappearance day of Gaura-sakti, Srila Gadadhara Pandit Goswami, in his Calcutta home, Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur entered the midday pastimes of Sri Sri Radha and Govinda at Radha Kund. Six years later, the worshipable Mata Ṭhakuraṇi, his wife Sri Bhagavati Devi, went to join him.

### **Srimad-Bhaktivinoda-viraha-dasakam**

(Ten verses describing the feelings of separation from Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur written for the occasion of his disappearance day by His Grace Bhakti-rakṣaka Sridhara Deva Goswami in 1936)

ha ha bhaktivinoda ṭhakkura guro dvaviṁsatis te sama  
dirghad-duḥkha-bharad aseṣa-virahad duḥkhikṛta bhur iyaṁ |  
jivanam bahu-janma-puṇya-nivahakṛṣṭo mahimaṇḍale  
avirbhava-kṛpam cakara ca bhavan sri-gaura-saktiḥ svayam ||1||

Alas! Alas! My guru Bhaktivinoda Thakur! It is now twenty-two long years that

the world has been burdened with the grief of your separation. You are the personification of Sri Gauranga's energy and you mercifully appeared in this world being attracted by many lifetimes of the living beings' pious activities.

dino'ham cira-duṣkṛtir na hi bhavat-padabja-dhuli-kaṇa-  
snanananda-nidhiṁ prapanna-subhadaṁ labdhuṁ samartho'bhavam  
kintv audarya-guṇat tavati-yasasaḥ karuṇya-saktiḥ svayam  
sri-sri-gaura-mahaprabhoḥ prakāṭita visvaṁ samanvagrahit ||2||

Being most fallen and possessing nothing but sinful activity in my past, I have not been able to attain the joyful treasure of being bathed in the dust of your lotus feet, which brings all auspiciousness to the surrendered. Even so, you are deservedly renowned for your magnanimity. You are the personification of Lord Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's compassionate powers who have appeared in this world in order to bestow upon it his divine blessings.

he deva! stavane tavakhila-guṇanaṁ te virincadayo  
deva vyartha-manorathaḥ kim u vyaṁ martyadhamāḥ kurmahe |  
etan no vibudhaiḥ kadapy atisayalaṅkara ity ucyataṁ  
sastreṣv eva na paraye'ham iti yad gitaṁ mukundena ca ||3||

O Lord! The gods led by Brahma are frustrated when they endeavor to glorify your unlimited virtues. What then can low-born humans such as we accomplish? This is no rhetorical exaggeration, as some scholars may claim, for even Mukunda himself has said the same to the gopis in the Bhagavat (10.32.22).

dharmas carmagato'jnataiva satata yogas ca bhogatmakō  
jnane sunya-gatir japena tapasa khyati-jighamsaiva ca |  
dane dambhikatanuraga-bhajane duṣṭapacaro yada  
buddhiṁ buddhimataṁ bibheda hi tada dhatra bhavan preṣitaḥ ||4||

You were sent by the Lord when even the most intelligent people's wisdom was ruined through religious activities which only sought bodily pleasures, through a constant state of ignorance, in yoga which had sensual enjoyment as its goal, in the idea that the goal of knowledge is the void, in the desire to destroy individual consciousness through prayer and austerity, in arrogant pride in giving charity, and from evil practices spread in the name of raganuga-bhajana.

visve'smin kiraṇair yatha himakaraḥ sanjivayan nauṣadhir  
nakṣatraṇi ca ranjayan nija-sudhaṁ vistarayan rajate |  
sac-chastraṇi ca toṣayan budha-gaṇaṁ sammodayaṁs te tatha  
nunaṁ bhumi-tale subhodaya iti hlado bahuḥ satvatam ||5||

Just as in this universe, the moon gives life to the world's vegetation, revitalizes the constellations and spreads its own nectar with its rays, so too, your auspicious appearance on Earth brought satisfaction to the holy scriptures, joy to the intelligent and a great amounts of ecstasy to the Vaishnavas.

lokanam hita-kamyaya bhagavato bhakti-pracaras tvaya  
granthanam racanaiḥ satam abhimatair nanavidhair darsitaḥ|  
acaryaiḥ kṛta-purvam eva kila yad ramanujadyair budhaiḥ

premambhodhi-vigrahasya bhavato mahatmya-sima na tat ||6||

Desiring the welfare of everyone in the world, you displayed the method of preaching devotion to the Supreme Lord through writing a variety of books which were appreciated by the saintly. The glorious achievements of all the previous acharyas such as Ramanuja, etc., cannot match yours, for you are the embodiment of the ocean of prema.

yad-dhamnaḥ khalu dhama caiva nigame brahmeti saṁjnayate  
yasyaṁsasya kalaiva duḥkha-nikarair yogesvarair mṛgyate |  
vaikuṇṭhe para-mukta-bhṛṅga-caraṇo narayaṇo yaḥ svayaṁ  
tasyaṁsi bhagavan svayaṁ rasa-vapuḥ kṛṣṇo bhavan tat-pradaḥ ||7||

You came to give the Supreme Person Krishna himself, whose body is the form of sacred rapture, the effulgence of whose abode is known in the Veda as Brahman, whose mere partial expansion is the goal of the great yogis' austere practices, who is the source of Narayan himself, whose lotus feet are surrounded by the most advanced, bee-like liberated souls in Vaikuntha.

sarvacintya-maye paratpara-pure goloka-vṛndavane  
cil-lila-rasa-raṅgini parivṛta sa radhika sri-hareḥ |  
vatsalyadirasais ca sevita-tanor madhurya-seva-sukhaṁ  
nityaṁ yatra mada tanoti hi bhavan tad-dhama-seva-pradaḥ ||8||

You bestowed service to the completely inconceivable divine abode of Goloka

Vrindavan, which lies beyond the other spiritual worlds, where Radha, surrounded by her sakhis, whose pleasure is in the transcendental nectar of the spiritual pastimes, joyfully constantly serves in the erotic mood Sri Hari who is worshiped in the moods of parenthood, etc.

sri-gauranumataṁ Svarupa-viditaṁ rupagrajenadr̥taṁ  
rupadyaiḥ parivesitaṁ raghu-gaṇair asvaditaṁ sevitam |  
jivadyair abhirakṣitaṁ suka-siva-brahmadi-saṁmanitaṁ  
sri-radha-pada-sevanamṛtam aho tad datum iso bhavan ||9||

You are perfectly competent to give the nectar of service to Sri Radha's feet, which was approved by Gauranga Mahaprabhu, which was understood by Svarupa Damodar, adored by Sanatan Goswami, distributed by Sri Rupa Goswami, relished and enjoyed by Raghunath and the rest of Sri Rupa's followers, and which is respected by Suka, Shiva and Brahma, etc.,

kvahaṁ manda-matis tv ativa patitaḥ kva tvaṁ jagat-pavanaḥ  
bho svamin kṛpayaparadha-nicayo nunaṁ tvaya kṣamyatam |  
yace'haṁ karuṇa-nidhe varam imaṁ padabja-mule bhavat-  
sarvasvavadhi-radhika-dayita-dasanaṁ gaṇe gaṇyatam ||10||

I am a wicked-minded fallen soul, so far from you who purify the entire universe. O Master! Please forgive me all my offenses out of your great compassion. I beg you, O ocean of mercy, to grant me this boon that I be included amongst the followers of Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur, for whom your lotus feet are everything.

## **Srimad-Bhaktivinoda-dasakam**

(This poem appeared in the Gaudiya magazine, July 1939, 7.47)

amanda-karuṇya-guṇakara sri-  
caitanya-devasya dayavataṛaḥ |  
sa gaura-saktir bhavita punaḥ kiṁ  
padaṁ dṛsor bhakti-vinoda-devaḥ ||1||

O ocean of unlimited compassion, you are the incarnation of Chaitanya Deva's mercy. You are the energy of Gauranga. O Lord Bhaktivinoda, when will you again be visible to me? ||1||

srīmaj-Jagannath-prabhu-priyo ya  
ekatmako gaura-kisorakena |  
sri-gaura-karuṇya-mayo bhavet kiṁ  
nityaṁ smṛtau bhakti-vinoda-devaḥ ||2||

When will Bhaktivinoda Prabhu, the embodiment of Mahaprabhu's blessings, remain fixed in my memory? He is dear to Jagannath Prabhu and is not different from Gaura Kisora Das Babaji.

sri-nama-cintamaṇi-sampracarair  
adarsam acaravidhau dadhau yaḥ |  
sa jagarukaḥ smṛti-mandire kiṁ  
nityaṁ bhaved bhakti-vinoda-devaḥ ||3||

When will Bhaktivinoda Prabhu, who gave the example how to act by preaching the jewel of the Holy Name, remain alive in the temple of my memory?

namaparadhai rahitasya namno  
mahatmya-jataṁ prakāṣaṁ vidhaya |  
jīve dayalur bhavita smṛtau kiṁ  
kṛtasano bhakti-vinoda-devaḥ ||4||

When will Bhaktivinoda Prabhu, most merciful to all living beings, take his place in my mind after revealing the glories of the Holy Name, void of any offenses?

gaurasya guḍha-prakāṣalayasya  
sato'sato harṣa-kunatyayos ca |  
prakasako gaurajano bhavet kiṁ  
smṛtyaspadam bhakti-vinoda-devaḥ ||5||

When will I remember Bhaktivinoda Prabhu, the member of Gauranga's entourage who revealed his hidden birthplace, to the joy of the saintly and the envious reaction of the wicked?

nirasya vighnan iha bhakti-gaṅga-  
pravahanenoddhṛta-sarvalokaḥ |  
bhagiratho nitya-dhiyaṁ padaṁ kiṁ  
bhaved asau bhakti-vinoda-devaḥ ||6||

Like King Bhagiratha, he saved the entire world by destroying all impediments and allowing the Ganga of pure devotion to flow. When will Bhaktivinoda Prabhu be the permanent object of my meditation?

visveṣu caitanya-katha-pracari  
mahatmya-saṁsi guru-vaiṣṇavanam |  
nama-grahadarsa iha smṛtaḥ kiṁ  
cette bhaved bhakti-vinoda-devaḥ ||7||

When will I remember Bhaktivinoda Prabhu, who preached the message of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu throughout the world, who glorified the guru and the Vaishnavas and who set the example for chanting the Holy Name.

prayojanaṁ sann abhidheya-bhakti-



siddhanta-vaṇya samam atra gaura- |  
kisora-sambandha-yuto bhavet kim  
cittaṁ gato bhakti-vinoda-devaḥ ||8||

When will Bhaktivinoda Prabhu, himself the representative of the proyojana-tattva, appear in my mind, accompanied by Gaura Kisora Das Babaji, the personification of the sambandha-tattva, and by Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati, the incarnation of the abhidheya-tattva. [bhakti-vinoda or taking delight in devotional service is the ultimate goal of prema, sambandha is the relationship with Mahaprabhu (Gaura-kisora) and the devotional processes established by the doctrine, or bhakti-siddhanta are the abhidheya-tattva.]

sikṣamṛtaṁ sajjana-toṣaṇiṁ ca  
cintamaṇiṁ catra sajaiva-dharmam |  
prakasya caitanya-prado bhavet kim  
citte dhr̥to bhakti-vinoda-devaḥ ||9||

When will Bhaktivinoda Prabhu, who made people conscious of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu through his publications Chaitanya-sikṣamṛta, Sajjana-toṣaṇi, Harinama-cintamaṇi, and Jaiva Dharma, be held constantly in my mind.

aṣaḍha-darse'hani gaura-sakti-  
gadadharabhinna-tanur jahau yaḥ |  
prapanca-lilam iha no bhavet kim  
dṛśyaḥ punar bhakti-vinoda-devaḥ ||10||

When will Bhaktivinoda Prabhu appear to us again? Being non-different from Gaura-sakti Gadadhara Pandit, he left the material world on the same day as he, the dark-moon-day of Aṣarha month.

### **Sri Godrumacandra-bhajanopadesa**

(“Instructions to worship the Moon of Godruma”. These verses were published posthumously for the first time in 1950 in Gaudiya magazine, 18.47-8 (pp. 757-8)

yadi te hari-pada-saroja-sudha-  
rasa-pana-param hṛdayam satatam |  
parihṛtya grham kali-bhava-mayam  
bhaja godruma-kanana-kunja-vidhum ||1||

If your heart wishes to always drink the nectar of Hari’s lotus feet, then abandon your home which is filled with the spirit of Kali and worship the moon of Godruma’s forest bowers.

dhana-yauvana-jivana-rajya-sukham  
Nahi nityam anukṣaṇa-nasa-param |  
tyaja gramya-katha-sakalam viphalam

bhaja godruma-kanana-kunja-vidhum ||2||

All your joys from wealth, youth, life and power are all temporary and susceptible to destruction at any moment. Give up all your useless mundane discourses and worship the moon of Godruma's forest bowers.

ramaṇi-jana-saṅga-sukhaṁ ca sakhe

carama bhayadaṁ puruṣārtha-haram |

hari-nama-sudha-rasa-matta-matir

bhaja godruma-kanana-kunja-vidhum ||3||

O friend! The joys of intercourse with beautiful women are ultimately a source of fear, for they prevent the achievement of life's goals. Become intoxicated with the nectar of the Holy Names and worship the moon of Godruma's forest bowers.

jaḍa-kavya-raso nahi kavya-rasaḥ

kali-pavana-gaura-raso hi rasaḥ |

alam any-kathady-anusilanaya

bhaja godruma-kanana-kunja-vidhum ||4||

The relishing of poetic sentiments is not the sacred rapture of devotional poetry. Real sacred rapture is found in the sentiments connected to the purifier of the age of Kali, Gaura. Give up the study of all other subjects and worship the moon of Godruma's forest bowers.

vṛṣabhanu-sutanvita-vama-tanuṁ  
yamuna-taṭa-nagara-nanda-sutam |  
murali-kala-gita-vinoda-param  
bhaja godruma-kanana-kunja-vidhum ||5||

Worship the moon of Godruma's forest bowers, the son of Nanda, the playboy who sports on the Yamuna's banks with the daughter of Vṛṣabhanu at his left side, joyfully playing wonderful songs on his flute.

hari-kirtana-madhyagataṁ svajanaiḥ  
pariveṣṭita-jambunadabha-hariṁ |  
nija-gauḍa-janaika-kṛpa-jaladhiṁ  
bhaja godruma-kanana-kunja-vidhum ||6||

Worship the moon of Godruma's forest bowers, the ocean of mercy for his own associates from the land of Gauḍa, whose effulgent form, surrounded by these associates as he dances in the midst of the kirtan, has been stolen from refined gold.

giriraja-suta-parivita-gṛham  
nava-khaṇḍa-patiṁ yati-citta-haram |  
sura-saṅgha-nutaṁ priyaya sahitaṁ

bhaja godruma-kanana-kunja-vidhum ||7||

Worship the moon of Godruma's forest bowers, whose house is surrounded by the daughters of the king of mountains, who is the Lord of the abode of nine islands, who steals the minds of the sannyasis and who, in the company of his beloved, is praised by the heavenly hosts.

kali-kukkura-mudgara-bhava-dharam

hari-nama-mahauṣadha-dana-param |

patitarta-dayardra-sumurti-dharam

bhaja godruma-kanana-kunja-vidhum ||8||

Worship the moon of Godruma's forest bowers, who has taken the mood of the hammer-wielding chastiser of the Kali-dog, who brings the gift of the Holy Name medicine, and whose form is soaked in tearful compassion for the fallen.

ripu-bandhava-bheda-vihina-daya

yad abhikṣṇam udeti mukhabja-tatau |

tam akrṣṇam iha vraja-raja-sutam

bhaja godruma-kanana-kunja-vidhum ||9||

His mercy makes no distinction between friend and foe. Though his bodily hue is not black, he is the son of the King of Vraja. Worship the moon of Godruma's forest bowers.

iha copaniṣat-parigita-vibhur  
dvija-raja-sutaḥ puraṭabha-hariḥ |  
nija-dhamani khelati bandhu-yuto  
bhaja godruma-kanana-kunja-vidhum ||10||

Worship the moon of Godruma's forest bowers--he whose glories are sung in the Upaniṣads and is now a son of the best of Brahmins with a golden bodily hue, playing in his own dham with his eternal associates.

avatar-varaṁ paripurṇa-phalaṁ  
para-tattvam ihatma-vilasa-mayam |  
vraja-dhama-rasambudhi-gupta-rasaṁ  
bhaja godruma-kanana-kunja-vidhum ||11||

Worship the moon of Godruma's forest bowers, who is the best of the incarnations of the Supreme, who brings the ultimate fruit of spiritual life, who is the Supreme Truth come into this world out of his own pleasure and who relish a taste hidden in the ocean of rapture that is Vraja Dhama.

sruti-varṇa-dhanadi na yasya kṛpa-  
janane balavad-bhajanena vina |  
tam ahaituka-bhava-patha hi sakhe

bhaja godruma-kanana-kunja-vidhum ||12||

Learning or high birth are useless in bringing about his mercy without intense bhajana. O friend, worship the moon of Godruma's forest bowers without any desire for any fruits.

api nakra-gatau hrada-madhya-gataṁ

kam amocayad arta-janaṁ tam ajam |

avicintya-balaṁ siva-kalpa-taruṁ

bhaja godruma-kanana-kunja-vidhum ||13||

This same Lord also once liberated a distressed demigod from a crocodile body within the lake known as Goradaha. He is the unborn one, possessing inconceivable power, and is truly a desire tree of pure auspiciousness. Just worship the beautiful Moon of Godruma's forest bowers. [FN: This incident is recounted in Jagadananda's Prema-vilasa, chapter 15.]

surabhindra-tapaḥ-parituṣṭa-mano

vara-varṇa-dharo harir avirabhut |

tam ajasra-sukhaṁ muni-dhairya-haraṁ

bhaja godruma-kanana-kunja-vidhum ||14||

When his mind was pleased by the austerities of Indra and Surabhi, he appeared in a golden form before them. Worship the moon of Godruma's forest bowers, who brings unlimited pleasure and who disturbs the calm minds of the silent

sages. [This incident is described in Bhaktivinoda's Nabadwip-dhama-mahâtmya.]

abhilaṣa-cayaṁ tad abheda-dhiyam  
asubhaṁ ca subhaṁ ca tyaja sarvam idam |  
anukulataya priya-sevanaya  
bhaja godruma-kanana-kunja-vidhum ||15||

Give up all your desires for sense enjoyment. Give up the idea that you are identical with the Lord. Abandon both auspicious and inauspicious works. Only worship the moon of Godruma's forest bowers with acts compatible with his pleasure and by serving those dear to him.

hari-sevaka-sevana-dharma-paro  
hari-nama-rasamṛta-pana-rataḥ  
nati-dainya-daya-paramana-yuto  
bhaja godruma-kanana-kunja-vidhum ||16||

Become fixed in the religion of serving the servants of Hari. Be fixed in drinking the nectar of the Holy Names. Always be fixed in respect, humility and compassion. Worship the moon of Godruma's forest bowers.

vada yadava madhava kṛṣṇa hare  
vada rama janardana kesava he |  
vṛṣabhanu-suta-priyanatha sada



bhaja godruma-kanana-kunja-vidhum ||17||

Sing the names of Yadava, Madhava, Krishna and Hari. Sing the names of Rama, Janardana and Keshava. Always sing the name of the dearest lord of the daughter of Vṛṣabhanu. Worship the moon of Godruma's forest bowers.

vada yamuna-tira-vanadri-pate

vada gokula-kanana-punja-rave |

vada rasa-rasayana gaura-hare

bhaja godruma-kanana-kunja-vidhum ||18||

Sing the name of the Lord of the forests by the Yamuna banks. Sing the name of the sun which lights up the gardens of Gokula. Sing the name of Gaurahari, the alchemist of sacred rapture. Worship the moon of Godruma's forest bowers.

cala gaura-vanam nava-khaṇḍamayam

paṭha gaurahares caritaṇi muda |

luṭha gaura-padaṅkita-gaṅga-taṭam

bhaja godruma-kanana-kunja-vidhum ||19||

Go live in Gauranga's forest with its nine divisions. Study the lives of Gaurahari. Roll about in the dust by the banks of the Ganges marked with Gauranga's footprints. And worship the moon of Godruma's forest bowers.

smara gaura-gadadhara-keli-kalam  
bhava gaura-gadadhara-pakṣa-carah |  
sr̥ṇu gaura-gadadhara-caru-katham  
bhaja godruma-kanana-kunja-vidhum ||20||

Remember always the enchanting pastimes of Gaura-Gadadhara. Become a follower of Gaura-Gadadhara. Always listen to the enchanting topics of Gaura-Gadadhara. Worship the moon of Godruma's forest bowers.

### **A list of Bhaktivinoda Thakur's written works**

Other than the titles already mentioned, Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur wrote numerous works from 1866 to 1907 which are listed here as far as possible.

- (1) Balid-e-registry (Urdu), 1856.
- (2) Speech on Gautam (English), 1856.
- (3) Speech on the Bhagavatam (English), 1869.
- (4) Garbha-stotra-vyakhya (Bengali), 1870.
- (5) Reflections (English), 1871.
- (6) Slokas of Haridas Thakur's Samadhi (English), 1871.
- (7) Jagannatha Mandir of Puri (English), 1871.
- (8) Akhras of Puri (English), 1871.

- (9) Vedantadhikaraṇa-mala (Sanskrit), 1872.
- (10) Datta-kaustubham (Sanskrit), 1874.
- (11) Datta-vaṁsa-mala (Sanskrit), 1876.
- (12) Bauddha-vijaya-kavyam (Sanskrit), 1878.
- (13) Sri-Kṛṣṇa-saṁhita (Sanskrit and Bengali), 1880.
- (14) Kalyaṇa-kalpa-taru (Bengali songs), 1881.
- (15) Sri-sajjana-toṣaṇi (Bengali monthly magazine) from 1881-1898.
- (16) Review of Nitya-Svarupa-saṁsthapana (English), 1883.
- (17) Srimad-Bhagavad-gita, with Vishvanath Chakravarti's commentary, and Rasika-ranjana translation (Bengali), 1886.
- (18) Sri-Caitanya-sikṣaṁṛta (Bengali), 1886.
- (19) Sammodana commentary to Sikṣaṣṭaka (Sanskrit), 1886.
- (20) Manaḥ-sikṣa padyanuvada (Bengali), 1886.
- (21) Dasopaniṣac-curṇika (Sanskrit), 1886.
- (22) Bhavavali, verses and commentary (Sanskrit), 1886.
- (23) Prema-pradipa (Bengali novel), 1886.
- (24) Vishnu-sahasra-nama with Baladeva's commentary (Sanskrit), 1886.
- (25) Published Satyaraja Khan's Sri-Kṛṣṇa-vijaya, 1886.
- (26) Caitanyopaniṣat with Chaitanya-caraṇaṁṛta commentary (Sanskrit), 1887.
- (27) Vaishnava-siddhanta-mala (Bengali), 1888.
- (28) Sri-Amnaya-sutra (Sanskrit sutras, Bengali explanation), 1890.

- (29) Sridhama-Nabadwip-mahatmya (Bengali), 1890.
- (30) Siddhanta-darpaṇa translation (Bengali), 1890.
- (31) Srimad-Bhagavad-gita, Bengali translation (Vidvad-ranjana-bhaṣya) and Baladeva's Sanskrit commentary (Bengali), 1891.
- (32) Sri-Harinama (Bengali), 1892.
- (33) Sri-Nama (Bengali), 1892.
- (34) Sri-Nama-tattva (Bengali), 1892.
- (35) Sri-Nama-mahima (Bengali), 1892.
- (36) Sri-Nama-pracara (Bengali), 1892.
- (37) Sriman-Mahaprabhura Sikṣa (Bengali), 1892.
- (38) Tatta-viveka (Sanskrit verses and Bengali comment), 1893.
- (39) Saraṇagati (Bengali songs), 1893.
- (40) Soka-satana (Bengali song), 1893.
- (41) Jaiva-dharma (Bengali), 1893.
- (42) Tattva-sutra (Sanskrit and Bengali), 1894.
- (43) Isopaniṣat Vedarka-didhiti-vyakhya (Bengali), 1894.
- (44) Tattva-muktavali or Mayavada-sata-duṣaṇi (Sanskrit and Bengali), 1894.
- (45) Amṛta-pravaha-bhaṣya on Chaitanya-caritamṛta (Bengali), 1895.
- (46) Sri-Gauraṅga-smaraṇa-maṅgala-stotra (Sanskrit), 1896.
- (47) Life and Precepts of Sree Chaitanya Mahaprabhu (English), 1896.
- (48) Sri-Ramanuja-Upadesa (Bengali), 1896.

- (49) Artha-pancaka (Bengali), 1896.
- (50) Bengali translation of Brahma-saṁhita, 1897.
- (51) Kalyaṇa-kalpa-taru (Revised), 1897.
- (52) Translation and comment on Krishnakarṇamṛta (Bengali), 1898.
- (53) Translation and commentary on Upadesamṛtam (Bengali), 1898.
- (54) Bhagavad-gita with Madhva's commentary (Bengali), 1898.
- (55-56) Sanatan Goswami's Bṛhad-Bhagavatamṛta in two volumes (Bengali translation), 1898.
- (57) Narahari Thakur's Bhajanamṛta (Bengali translation), 1899.
- (58) Nabadwip-bhava-taraṅgini (Bengali verse), 1899.
- (59) Sri-Harinama-cintamaṇi (Bengali verse), 1900.
- (60) Tattva-vaṁsa-mala (Bengali)
- (61) Bhagavatarka-marici-mala (compilation and Bengali translation), 1900.
- (62) Sri-saṅkalpa-kalpadruma (Bengali translation), 1900.
- (63) Padma-purāṇa (edited), 1901.
- (64) Bhajana-rahasya (collection of verses and Bengali verse translation), 1902.
- (65) Vijana-grama o sannyasai (Bengali verse, revised edition), 1902.
- (66) Sri-Kṛṣṇa-saṁhita (Sanskrit and Bengali, revised), 1903.
- (67) Sat-kriya-sara-dipika (edited), 1903.
- (68) Sri-Caitanya-sikṣamṛta (revised and expanded), 1905.
- (69) Prema-vivarta (Bengali), 1905.

(70) Sva-niyama-dvadasakam (Sanskrit verse), 1906.

(71) Sri-Nimbarka-Dasa-sloki (Bengali trans. and comment), 1907.

(72) Sri-Gitimala (Bengali songs), 1907.

(73) Sri-Gitavali (Bengali songs), 1907.

(74) Harikatha (Bengali verse), 1850.

From 1878 to 1881, while Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur was living at Naṛāla in Jessore district, he wrote Sri-Kṛṣṇa-saṁhita and Kalyāṇa-kalpa-taru and started publishing the monthly magazine, Sajjana-toṣaṇi. While in Barasat in 1883, he published Sajjana-toṣaṇi in English. Then while in Serampore (Sriramapura) in 1886 he published his translation-commentary Rasika-ranjana with Vishvanath's commentary Sarartha-darsini to Bhagavad-gita, Chaitanya-sikṣamṛta, Sanmodana-bhaṣya to Sikṣamṛta and Bhaktivinoda. In 1887 while in Sambalpur, he received an old manuscript of Caitanyopaniṣat from a disciple named Madhusudana Das. Later in the same year, while living in Krishnanagara, he started work on Amnaya-sutra and published his Nabadwip-mahatmya. In 1896, after returning to Calcutta from Tripura he wrote his English Life and Precepts of Sree Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and the Sanskrit Gaurāṅga-smaraṇa-maṅgala-stotra.

## **Srila Gaura Kisora Das Babaji**

namo gaura-kisoraya sakṣad vairagya-murtaye |

vipralambha-rasambhodhe padambujaya te namaḥ ||

I bow to your lotus feet, Srila Gaura Kisora Das Babaji, the embodiment of renunciation and the ocean of sacred rapture in separation.

## **Early life**

Paramahansa Srila Gaura Kisora Das Babaji Maharaj was born into a Vaisya family on the banks of the Padma River in Bagayana village in Faridpur district in what is now Bangla Desh. The names of his parents are unknown. His given name was Vamsi Das. He was born sometime in the middle of the nineteenth century. He is important to us because he was the diksha guru of Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Prabhupada, founder of the Chaitanya Math and the world-wide Gaudiya Maths.

Vamsi Das's parents had him married at an early age according to the custom of the time, but always remained detached from householder life. His main interest was always worshiping the Lord. When his wife died, he left home and went to Vrindavan where he took the paramahansa-veṣa from Bhagavata Das Babaji (a disciple of Srila Jagannath Das Babaji Maharaj) and took the name Gaura Kisora Das Babaji.

## **Gaura Kisora comes to Nabadwip**

After being initiated into the Babaji order, Gaura Kisora Das spent thirty years in Vraja engaged in intense religious practice. He also travelled outside of the Vraja area, visiting northern India and Bengal. While in the East, he met many of the leading Vaishnavas of Bengal and Orissa, such as Svarupa Das Babaji of Puri, Bhagavan Das Babaji of Kalna and Chaitanya Das Babaji of Kuliya.

In 1893, when the birthplace of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu was inaugurated at the Sri Mayapur Yoga Pith, Jagannath Das Babaji Maharaj ordered him to stay in Nabadwip. This is where Gaura Kisora remained for the rest of his life. He saw all the residents of Nabadwip with transcendental eyes, considering them to be divine beings. He thus accepted madhukari from them, cooking everything in a rejected clay bowl. It is said that sometimes he would subsist on nothing but

Ganges water and mud. Sometimes he would go for long periods without eating, chanting the Holy Names constantly. He set the standard for those in the renounced order who live the life of solitary worship, remaining completely independent of others. Mahaprabhu's personal envoy, Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur was extremely impressed by Gaura Kisora's extraordinary renunciation, his pure devotion and his attachment to the Lord. Gaura Kisora would often go to Bhaktivinoda's home in Godrumadvipa, Svananda-sukhada-kunja, where he would listen to him give readings of the Bhagavat and discuss Vaishnava theology with him.

### **Saraswati Thākura meets Babaji Maharaj**

Babaji Maharaj never accepted service from anyone. He constantly chanted the Holy Name, sometimes counting the names on a tulasi mala, at other times by making knots on long strips of an old cloth. His favorite texts were Narottama Thakur's Prarthana and Prema-bhakti-candrika, which he considered to be his all-in-all. His renunciation resembled that of Raghunath Das Goswami and he possessed the same attachment to Krishna.

In 1898 AD, Gaura Kisora Das Babaji Maharaj met Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur for the first time at Svananda-sukhad-kunja in Godrumadvipa. Saraswati Thakur was enchanted by Babaji Maharaj's heartfelt emotional kirtan. He wrote the kirtan down and later taught it to his own disciples. The song describes Raghunath Das Goswami's ecstatic separation from Radha.

kothay go premamayi radhe radhe |

radhe radhe go, jaya radhe radhe ||

dekha diye prāṇa rakha radhe radhe |

tomara kaṅgala tomaya ḍake radhe radhe |



radhe vṛndavana-vilasini radhe radhe |  
radhe kanu-mano-mohini radhe radhe |  
radhe aṣṭa-sakhira siromaṇi radhe radhe |  
radhe vṛṣabhanu-nandini radhe radhe |  
(gosani) niyama kare sadai ḍake radhe radhe |  
(gosani) ekabara ḍake kesi-ghaṭe radhe radhe |  
abara ḍake vaṁsi-baṭe radhe radhe |  
(gosani) ekabara ḍake nidhuvane radhe radhe |  
abara ḍake kunja-vane radhe radhe |  
(gosani) ekabara ḍake radhakunḍe radhe radhe |  
abara ḍake syama-kunḍe radhe radhe |  
(gosani) ekabara ḍake kusuma-vane radhe radhe |  
abara ḍake govardhane radhe radhe |  
(gosani) ekabara ḍake tala-vane radhe radhe |  
abara ḍake tamala-vane radhe radhe |  
(gosani) maline vasana diye gaya,  
vrajera dhulaya gaṛagaṛi jaya., radhe radhe |  
(gosani) mukhe radha radha bale  
bhese nayanera jale, radhe radhe |  
(gosani) vṛndavane kulakuli  
kenḍe beṛaya radha bali, radhe radhe |

(gosani) chapanna daṇḍa ratri dine, jane na  
radha-govinda bine, radhe radhe |  
tara para cari daṇḍa suti thake svapne  
radha-govinda dekhe, radhe radhe ||

Where is the incarnation of love, Radhe Radhe! Glories to Radha| Show yourself to me, Radha, give me back my life. I have become a beggar for you, Radha, and I am calling you. O Radha, you cavort in Vrindavan, you enchant Krishna's mind, you are chief amongst the eight sakhis, and are the daughter of Vṛṣabhanu.

Raghunath Das Goswami regularly, constantly calls out to you, Radha. He calls for you in Keshi Ghat, in Vāṁsi Baṭa, Nidhuvana, Kunjavana, in Radha Kund and Syama Kund, in Kusumavana and Govardhana, in Talavana and Tamalavana. He calls out wearing only a worn and dirty cloth and rolling in the Vrindavan dust. The names of Radha on his lips, his eyes are filled with tears. He wanders through every part of Vraja, calling Radha's name. Night or day, for twenty-three hours he thinks of nothing but Radha and Govinda, and when he sleeps, he dreams of Radha and Govinda.

### **Gaura Kisora initiates Srila Prabhupada**

In January 1900, Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur took initiation from Gaura Kisora Das Babaji on the instructions of Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur. Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati was Babaji Maharaj's only disciple. Babaji Maharaj was an anchorite who had sworn not to take any disciples, but he was forced to change his decision when he saw Saraswati Thakur's determination and devotion.

The story is told that Srila Prabhupada asked Gaura Kisora Das Babaji Maharaj several times to give him initiation. The first time he asked, Babaji

Maharaj told him, “If Mahaprabhu tells me to, I will.”

The second time Babaji Maharaj told him that he had forgotten to ask Mahaprabhu. Srila Prabhupada did not give up and came a third time, Babaji Maharaj said, “Virtuousness, scholarship and other qualities are not the means to attain the Lord. They do not give you any right to initiation.”

Though he had been turned back by Gaura Kisora Das Babaji repeatedly, Srila Prabhupada did not abandon his resolution. Ramanujacharya was turned back eighteen times before receiving the mercy of Goṣṭhipurṇa. Srila Prabhupada showed his qualities of patience and determination continued to come to Babaji Maharaj, humbly entreating him to give him initiation until finally his heart melted and out of great affection mercifully initiated Srila Prabhupada by sprinkling the dust of his lotus feet on his head.

Gaura Kisora Das Babaji would never allow any materialistic persons to touch his feet. If they did so, he would make a show of anger, saying, “You are doomed!” Most people were thus afraid to attempt it. On this occasion, however, he himself offered the dust of his feet to his dear disciple and smeared it on his body. From Srila Prabhupada’s disciples, it is heard that he was turned back twelve times before Babaji Maharaj became compassionate and initiated him at his thirteenth request. Others say that it happened on the fourth time. This story reminds one of Narottama’s initiation by Lokanatha Goswami. Unswerving dedication to the guru is the sign of a disciple. Afterward, Babaji Maharaj, judging Srila Prabhupada to be eminently qualified for the task, blessed him and ordered him to preach Mahaprabhu’s message all around the world.

### **Srila Prabhupada describes his guru**

Srila Prabhupada wrote the following words about his guru, with exemplary humility, in order to show the world definitively the path of auspiciousness: “In order to complete the gaping needs that I felt, I was busily trying to get my hands on everything under the sun. I thought that possessions would fulfill my needs. Over time, I had indeed accumulated a great number of rare possessions, but I was not able to rid myself of the sense of being unfulfilled. I had

encountered many personalities who were reputed to be great saints, but saw various lacunae in every one of them and so was unable to give them my respect. Fortunately, the supremely merciful Sri Gauranga Mahaprabhu allowed two of his dearest companions to show their kindness to me. I was egotistically so self-absorbed that I had completely lost any sense of where my well-being could be found. Even so, due to past pious activities, I was able to get the association of Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur who was my ever well-wisher. My Prabhu often came to visit him and sometimes stayed overnight at his house. Out of mercy to me, Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur introduced me to him. From the time that I first met my Prabhu, my stubborn egoism started to diminish. Previously, I used to think that everyone who took birth in a human body was filled with the same faults that I had, but upon seeing my Prabhu's divine character I realized that there truly were flawless Vaishnavas in this world who matched the ideal."

Srila Prabhupada further wrote, "Many people who saw Gaura Kisora Das Babaji, whether innocent or experienced, young or old, learned or ignorant, or proud of their being advanced devotees, were not able to truly see him. This is the divine power of Krishna's devotees. Hundreds of people came to him seeking help in fulfilling their material desires and he would give them advice, but this was a kind of deception. There are countless persons who take on the dress of a saintly person and make a show of acting like a saintly person, but on closer analysis are far from the standard. My Prabhu was not a cheater like them. It is clear from his spiritual activities that he identified complete honesty with the truth. His sincere affection was incomparable; it proved that the attainment of spiritual powers is a deception. He showed no enmity for those who opposed him or disagreed with him; similarly, he made no particular external show of affection for those who were objects of his compassion. He used to say, 'I neither love nor hate anyone in this world; everyone is the object of my respect.'

"Amazingly, Prabhu would be surrounded by people with no understanding, fakers and materialists inimical to the path of pure devotion who thought themselves to be recipients of such a saintly person's mercy, but continued to engage in sensual activities. Prabhu never openly rejected any of these people, but he never openly accepted any of them, either."

## **Babaji Maharaj's disappearance**

Babaji Maharaj was an expert judge of character and had highly-developed foresight and clairvoyance, often foretelling events in the distant future.

On the 30th of Karttik in 1322 (Bengali ' 1915 AD), Paramahansa Srila Gaura Kisora Das Babaji entered the eternal pastimes of the Lord. At the time, he was residing at Raṇira Dharma-sala in Kuliya. When Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur received the news of his disappearance, he was overcome with feelings of separation from his guru and immediately hurried to the site of his departure. He was heart-broken to see that mahantas (abbots) of various akhaṛas (asramas) were busily arguing about where and how to bury his body. The idea of the Babajis was to lay claim to any future samadhi temple as such a temple would be an attractive pilgrimage site and a possible source of money-making. Srila Prabhupada alone stood up and spoke out against this rascaldom. As things heated up, Nabadwip's chief of police, Jatindranath Singh Ray Bahadur, came to maintain the peace.

At that time, Srila Prabhupada had not yet taken tridaṇḍi sannyas. The Babajis argued that as they had taken the renounced order, they had the right to perform the last rites for one of their order. As this was not the case for Srila Prabhupada, he had no rights. Srila Prabhupada displayed his spiritual strength and stated that he was Babaji Maharaj's one and only disciple. He then asked them if there was any amongst them who had not had illicit sexual relations in the previous six months, or even in the previous three months, or one month, or even in the previous three days. He who had so done would be doomed if he touched Babaji Maharaj's divine remains.

When he heard Srila Prabhupada make this challenge, Jatindra Babu asked how anyone could prove whether or not he had had illicit sexual relations. Srila Prabhupada answered that he would take anyone who came forward at his word. When the Babajis looked at the effulgence of pure spiritual practice emanating from Srila Prabhupada, they slowly slunk away, one by one. The chief of police was embarrassed at this sight and he payed his obeisances to Srila Prabhupada and then left himself.

Some residents of Kuliya told Srila Prabhupada what Babaji Maharaj had said about his last desires. Apparently, he had stated that he wished his body to be dragged through the streets of Nabadwip so that it would be covered by the

dust of the holy dham. Srila Prabhupada replied, “This is my gurudeva. Even Krishna is honored to carry him on his shoulders and carries him like a crown upon his head. He said these things to confound the pride of the materialists with his humility. We may be inexperienced fools and offenders, but we should still make an effort to understand his intention. When Hari Das Thakur entered his eternal pastimes, Lord Gauranga took his body to his chest and danced with it. What a precedent he set for honoring the perfected soul’s departure! We would rather follow Mahaprabhu’s example and carry Siddha Baba’s divine remains on our head.”

On the first day of Agrahayan in Kuliya’s Nutana Caṛa, Srila Prabhupada performed the samadhi rites for Srila Gaura Kisora Das Babaji according to Vaishnava Smṛti injunctions. A certain Poddar Mahasaya of Lohagaṛa in Jessore district gave the land for the samadhi, renouncing any claims on the property. Later, however, he reneged on his promise and came to live there himself and engaged in various illicit activities on the site. During the Ganges floods one season, the samadhi temple was washed into the river. On the 5th of Bhadra, 1339 Bengali (1932 AD) Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur retrieved some of his remains from the Ganges bed and took them to the Chaitanya Math where he established a samadhi temple on the banks of Radha Kuṇḍ. The site was consecrated on the 2nd of Asvina, 1339 and in the course of time, a small temple housing a murti of Gaura Kisora Das Babaji was constructed there. The murti’s nitya-seva has continued ever since.

## **Babaji Maharaj’s teachings**

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur told of a few events from Gaura Kisora Das Babaji’s life which are full of import for the practitioner of devotional life.

(1) On one occasion, a certain babaji came to visit Srila Gaura Kisora Das Babaji with some of his followers in tow. These acolytes began glorifying their guru to Babaji Maharaj, “Our Prabhu is so merciful. He takes so much trouble to travel from place to place to deliver the poor, fallen souls. If he did not travel, what would be the destiny of these forsaken places?” Babaji Maharaj immediately

became cross and answered, “If someone makes a pretense of delivering the world when in fact he is only interested in making money and garnering prestige, he not only does no one any good, but falls down for having cheated others.”

(2) One day, a few devotees were describing the expertise of a particular lecturer on the Bhagavat. Babaji Mahasaya knew that this individual received money for his services. He said, “This fellow does not explain the Bhagavat or the scriptures of the Goswamis. He is simply speaking on the sense-gratification scriptures. He isn’t chanting ‘Gaura, Gaura!’ or ‘Krishna, Krishna!’, but ‘Money! Money!’. It has nothing to do with bhajana. The end result is that the true Vaishnava religion is obscured. Nothing good can come from it; indeed, the world will be harmed by such preaching.”

(3) One day Babaji Mahasaya was chanting japa late at night when he suddenly jumped up and exclaimed, “Did you see that? Did you see? A professional speaker on the Bhagavat has gone to Pabna district and has just made a chaste widow break her vows! What a shame! These rascals are giving Mahaprabhu’s religion a bad name.” He spoke as if he were personally witnessing the event.

(4) The owner of the Nabadwip Dharmasala was a certain Girisa Babu. One day, his wife offered to build a cottage for Babaji Maharaj. He answered, “I have no problem sleeping under the straw shelter on a boat. The only problem I have is that so many rascals are constantly coming to me asking me to bless them. They disturb my chanting. They don’t really want my blessings because they don’t really want what is best for them, but still they come to disrupt my chanting the Holy Name. If you give me your brick outhouse, I will be able to chant in peace. No one will come to bother me there.” When he realized that Babaji Mahasaya was serious, Girisa Babu immediately had the outhouse purified with cowdung and brought in a mason to completely redo the building.

(5) One day during the cold season, a devotee made a gift of a quilt to Babaji Mahasaya, but rather than wrapping himself in it, he simply draped it over the tiny bamboo shelter under which he slept. When asked why he did that, he answered that the cold would go away simply upon seeing the quilt.

(6) One day the Raja of Cossim Bazar, Sir Manindra Candra Nandi Bahadur, invited Babaji Maharaj to his palatial residence for a Vaishnava assembly. Babaji

Mahasaya answered, “If you want my association, leave all your riches and come and live under a bamboo shelter like mine. You won’t have to worry about food. I will beg for enough to feed both of us. If I go to stay in your palace, it won’t be long before I start desiring to enjoy sense gratification. I will start thinking about how I can accumulate a property for myself. Then before you know it, I will become your enemy. If you want to preserve our friendship and if you wish to be kind to me as your Vaishnava friend, then you will come to the Dhama and join me in worshiping the Lord and eating madhukari.”

### **Gaura Kisora Das Babaji’s favorite song**

Narottama Das Thakur’s songs were much beloved of Babaji Maharaj. He was often heard to sing one of them in particular. All the Vaishnava teachings can be found in this one song:

gaura pahu na bhajiya goinu

prema-ratana-dhana helaya harainu |

I have invited my spiritual death by not worshiping Lord Chaitanya. Due to my neglect, I have lost the invaluable jewel of love for Krishna.

adhane yatana kari dhana teyaginu.

apana karama-doṣe apani ḍubinu |

I have rejected the real purpose of my life and given my attention to worthless things. I am drowning because of my own misdeeds.



sat-saṅga chaṛi kainu asate vilasa

te-karaṇe lagila je karma-bandha-phaṇsa |

I have given up the association of devotees, but I am associating with common nonsense men. And that is why the noose of karmic entanglement has been placed around my neck.

viṣaya viṣama viṣa satata khainu

gaura-kirtana-rase magana na painu |

I have constantly drunk the most dangerous poison of sense gratification and so I could not merge myself into the sankirtan movement started by Lord Chaitanya.

keno va achaye praṇa ki sukha lagiya

narottama dasa kena na gela mariya |

Why am I living? What pleasure is life bringing me? Narottama asks, “Why did I not die long, long ago?”

**Srila Vamsi Das Babaji**

## **The paramahansa avadhuta**

This article has been written on the basis of ones which previously appeared in the old Gaudiya magazine and various statements made by Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur and his disciples who knew Vamsi Das Babaji personally.

Srila Vamsi Das Babaji appeared in the village of Majidpur in the Jamalpur district of Bangla Desh, near the city of Jamalpur. Before the partition of India, this city was formerly in the district of Mymensingh. According to Hari Das Das, his father's name was Sanatana Malobrahma and he was previously known as Bhairava.

Babaji Maharaj came to Nabadwip from East Bengal. He was a paramahansa Vaishnava who acted in the manner of an avadhuta. The word avadhuta refers to one who has shaken off from himself all worldly feeling and obligation. He does not care for social conventions, particularly the varṇasramadharma, i.e., he is quite eccentric in his behavior. Nityananda Prabhu is often characterized as an avadhuta.

He lived there under a tree on the banks of the Ganges, demonstrating a very high standard of renunciation. Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur was attracted by his Vaishnava behavior and his disregard for the rules and regulations of society at large, in the fashion of a paramahansa avadhuta. He himself paid his obeisances to Babaji Maharaj from a distance, but did not allow his disciples to associate with him. For even though Babaji Maharaj was a paramahansa Vaishnava, an ordinary beginner in devotional practice would likely misunderstand his indifference to the rules and regulations and end up committing offenses at his feet.

The primary purpose of the rules and regulations is to bring pleasure to Sri Sri Radha and Govinda. A practitioner who has not yet overcome his mundane conditioning may very well judge an advanced Vaishnava according to rules and regulations which were designed to help him advance to the next level of spiritual realization. If he measures a perfected soul by the standards which have been set for the beginner, there is a possibility of committing offenses which could result in falldown from the devotional path.

It is said that Babaji Maharaj had two cloth bags. He kept his Nitai-Gaura deities in one, Radha-Govinda in the other. He regularly worshiped them, taking them out of the bags and serving them mentally with mantras. Then, when he had finished, he would place the deities back in their bags. On occasion he would leave them outside the bags so that people could look at them. Once in a while, he would put tobacco in a hookah and offer it to Radha and Govinda from a distance, but not to Nitai-Gauranga. People would come with offerings of rice, fruits, vegetables, flour, bananas, etc., but Babaji Maharaj would ignore them. When he noticed an accumulation of these offerings, he would mentally give them to his deities and then distribute them to whomever happened to be present. What person could understand this kind of behavior?

Babaji Maharaj only wore a kaupina, a strip of cloth covering his private parts. He left his hair and beard uncut and unkept. Yet he was tall enough to be able to pick fruits for his puja from high branches in a tree without making use of ladders or other paraphernalia. On one occasion, he fell from a tree and from that time on he took on the guise of a lame person.

### **Babaji Maharaj's voyage to Vraja**

Babaji Maharaj did not stay exclusively in the Nabadwip area, but travelled to many holy places where he also practiced the spiritual disciplines of bhakti-yoga. He embodied the verse Krishna-bhakti-rasa-bhavita-matih, and wherever he went he always remained immersed in the ocean of Krishna-rasa. Therefore, everything reminded him of Krishna-lila, but especially the peepal tree, or baṭa. Whenever he saw a peepal tree, he would sit under it, taking it to be the Vamsi-baṭa under which Krishna played his flute to attract the gopis. Once he had installed himself there, it would be difficult to get him to move.

On the 12th of Phalguna, 1347 (Monday, Feb. 24, 1941), Vamsi Dasji left Nabadwip city and headed for Vrindavan. He sometimes walked, sometimes he travelled by ox-cart and sometimes by rail. He first went to Katwa where he stayed for two days under a baṭa tree near the train station. Then he took the train to Bhagalpur where he stayed for one day under a baṭa tree near the station and for four days by the Ganges. Then he travelled on to Gaya where he remained on

the banks of the Phalgu River for three days. He also stayed on a boat in the Ganges near Dasasvamedha Ghat in Benares for three days, spent another three days in Ayodhya by the Sarayu including three hours under a baṭa tree, at the Trivenī confluence at Prayag for ten days, two days at the Visrama Ghaṭ in Mathura, eight days at the Vāṁsi Baṭa in Vrindavan, nine days at the Madhyacūṛa on the banks of the Yamuna, one day at the Govindaji temple, two days at Kaliya-daha, eight days under a tamala tree on the east bank of Surya Kund at Nandagrama, two days at Pavana-sarovara, four days at the foot of a Pīlu tree, and then another nine days at Vāṁsi Baṭa Ghaṭ in Vrindavan. Everywhere that he went, he remained absorbed in chanting the Holy Names and meditating on Krishna's form and pastimes. After three months, he returned to Nabadwip Dhama, in the month of Jyestha.

Those who travelled with him recounted that when wandering through Vraja Maṇḍala, he would sometimes sing songs about Krishna's lila, sometimes glorify Nabadwip Dhama, sometimes laugh madly. Sometimes, he would babble incoherently, and oftentimes he would remain completely silent. When visiting a temple, he was often seen muttering confidentially to the deities, disclosing some personal sentiment to them. All in all, his companions were charmed by his devotional absorption.

In the old Gaudiya weekly magazine, further accounts of Babaji Maharaj's travels given. It is stated there in the four years from March 1943, he travelled to Ambika Kalna, Kharagpura, Balesvara, Soro, Bhadrak, Khurda Road and Purushottam. Afterwards, he again visited Gaya, Kashi, Saidpur, Patna, Munger, etc.

After travelling to all these places, some devotees from his birthplace in Majidpur invited him to come for a visit. He acquiesced to their enthusiasm, but found little pleasure in going. He said that it was a place which the Paṇḍavas had neglected.

## **Madhava Maharaj's story**

The founding acharya of the Chaitanya Gaudiya Math, my spiritual master,

nitya-lila-praviṣṭa Om Vishnupada Srimad Bhaktidayita Madhava Goswami Maharaj told a story about Vāṁsi Das Babaji from time to time. Gurudeva founded an asrama, the Shyamananda Gaudiya Math, in Midnapore city with the help of two of his godbrothers, H. H. Bhakti-vicara Yayabara Maharaj and H. H. Bhakti-kumuda Santa Maharaj. On one occasion, Babaji Maharaj was travelling and passed through Midnapore. When Gurudeva received the news that Babaji Maharaj was coming by ox-cart with a group of devotees, he immediately sent a disciple to invite him to visit the Math. Babaji Maharaj promised the disciple that he would come and so Gurudeva started to make preparations to receive the party of pilgrims. However, after the midday offering and arati, Srila Gurudeva waited for some time and no one from Vāṁsi Das's party came. Finally, Gurudeva took a number of his disciples and went to find him.

When Vāṁsi Das had entered the city with his party, he had seen a peepal tree and had taken it to be Vāṁsi Baṭa. He had camped there and made arrangements for making an offering to his deities and feeding his party there. When he saw Gurudeva, Babaji Maharaj remembered his affection for Srila Prabhupada and offered him some sweet rice prasada, which Gurudeva accepted respectfully. I often heard Gurudeva say how delicious the sweet rice tasted that day.

## **H. H. Bhakti-Pramoda Puri Maharaj's reminiscences**

My sikṣa-guru, H. H. Bhakti-pramoda Puri Maharaj has told a few anecdotes about Vāṁsi Das Babaji based on his eyewitness account: "At Babaji Maharaj's cottage by the Ganges, a pile of fruit intended for the service of the deities had accumulated once and Baba would not let anyone lay a finger on it. One day, however, a cow entered the cottage and ate all the fruits. Babaji Maharaj watched and laughed, clapping his hands. I can't remember now whether Baba's disciple's name was Purṇa or Puṇya. Anyhow, I asked him out of curiosity why Baba was laughing. He said, Last night a thief stole all the deity's pots and pans, dishes and utensils. Now a cow has come and eaten all the fruit. So he is beside himself with joy and is laughing and saying, 'One thief gives and another thief takes away!' No one was able to drive the cow away. The supreme thief is Krishna. [FN. According to Haridas Das, Vāṁsi Das Babaji never locked his

doors, even though he was asked to do so by his well-wishers. Thus he was regularly robbed. When asked why he didn't lock his doors, he only said that it was Gaura-Nitai's responsibility. It was their house and their possessions that were stolen. Sometimes he would chastise the deities for not stopping the thieves when he found that the pots or foodstuffs had been stolen. From Gaudiya Vaishnava Jivana, Vol 2, 327.]

“Babaji Maharaj never allowed anyone to touch his feet, but on the day after one Phalguni Purnima, when everyone remembered Jagannath Mishra's celebration of Gauranga's birth. Babaji Maharaj was so ecstatic that he forgot his rule and became as generous as a desire tree. So on that day I was fortunate enough to get the dust of his lotus feet. I also had the good fortune to get his prasadi leftovers one day.

“Babaji Maharaj enjoyed hearing devotional songs. One day, he heard Bhaktivinoda Thakur's couplet, tyajiya sayana sukha, vicitra palaṅka, kabe vrajer dhulaya dhusara habe aṅga -- ‘When will I give up the pleasure of sleeping in a comfortable bed and roll in the dust of Vrindavan?’ Babaji Maharaj said, ‘You are only singing a song. For someone who has exploded, it has exploded.’ In other words, we only sing the songs of the Mahajanas, but we feel no emotion. When the dust of the Holy Places covers our bodies, we only think of brushing it off. We have no real idea of its value.

“We have heard that Varṁsi Das took veṣa from our Parama Gurudeva, Srila Gaura Kisora Das Babaji Maharaj.

“One day, someone started singing one of these new-fangled, invented mantras that contradicts siddhanta and divine sentiment. Babaji Maharaj said, ‘That Name is not allowed here.’

“One gentleman often came to visit Babaji Maharaj and kept asking him for his mercy. One day, Baba finally became impatient and took off his kaupina and handed it to the gentleman and said, ‘You want mercy, here it is, take it.’ The visitor was frightened by the manner in which Baba challenged him. We have heard that all perfections come from the grace of the Vaishnavas, but we have not got the sincerity necessary to really take their blessings when they are given. What is the use of repeatedly saying, ‘Be merciful, be merciful.’

“We had an elderly Godbrother named Gokula Das Babaji. His family

home was not far from that of Babaji Maharaj. Gokula Das Baba went frequently to see Vamsi Das Baba, and when they got together, they would joyfully converse about Krishna in their Mymensingh dialect.”

## **Vamsi Das’s teachings**

Babaji Maharaj was normally occupied with his devotional activities; he minded his own business and spoke little. Many people would come to him; often they would ask him questions. If he took notice at all, he would sometimes answer indirectly, but mostly he remained silent. He would be observed talking to the deities, sometimes laughing, sometimes crying desperately. If he did give spiritual instruction, he would rarely cite scripture, but always spoke from his personal realization. In two or three short phrases, he was often able to make a deep impression on the listener.

Once, he had a regular visitor who kept asking him, “How can we attain God?” Babaji Maharaj just remained silent, giving no answer to the questioner. One day, he suddenly looked at this visitor and asked him, “What do you want?” The fellow replied, “I want to find God.” Babaji Maharaj answered in one word, “Cry.”

Those who visited him reported the short answers that he gave to their questions. Some of these were noted and are given here.

Q: Baba, what should we do?

A: If you worship Nitai, you will get Gaura. All your unhappiness will disappear and you will experience the beginnings of real joy.

Q: How can one become free from the demands of the senses?

A: suniya govinda-rab, apani palabe sab, sirinha-rabe yatha kari-gaṇ (Narottama Das). “They will all flee at the sound of Govinda’s name just as the deer flee at the sound of the lion’s roar.”

Q: Baba, you find no happiness in this world, then?

A: There is no joy here, unless you worship Gaura-Nitai. That is our eternal world, while this illusion is your world. Your happiness in this world is like the laughing or crying of a dreaming baby.

Q: How can we recognize the blessings of Krishna or the Vaishnavas?

A: je kare tomara asa, tare koro sarva-nasa -- “You ruin everything for someone who aspires to attain you.” kahake-o ṭaka dey, kaharo ṭaka nei -- “To some he gives wealth, while others are penniless.” Toma sthane aparadhe nahi paritraṇa -- “There is no pardon for an offense at your (Vaishnava Thakur’s) feet.” How can you stop it? Who will deliver you? Who will understand me if I try to explain? I haven’t got the slightest bit of attachment to the Vaishnavas.

Q: How will I attain Krishna’s mercy?

A: If you cry, you will get his mercy. Who cries? If you cry with tears of love, you will get the Lord’s mercy. Mukhe bali hari, kaje anya kari, prema-vari cokhe elo na -- “I recite the names of Hari, but I act otherwise. So the tears of love do not well up in my eyes.”

Q: How can we be happy? In renunciation or in enjoyment?

A: There are saintly persons on the Sarayu who chant the names of Sita Rama. They are happy, they know no distress. Those who stay with King Duryodhana know no joy. Those who are with Yudhiṣṭhira are happy. Happiness and distress are brothers. Enjoyment and renunciation. Some people enjoy and some renounce.

Q: Have you ever been to Mayapur?

A: Yes. Some call it Mayapur, some call it Nabadwip. There is buildings all over the Mayapur temple site and the deity is worshiped under a neem tree. I once went to Mayapur with a torn wrapper and a waterpot. Sachinandana Gosani (Mahaprabhu) came and took my waterpot. I sat down and waited and a few minutes later Sachinandana Gosani came and gave it back. Then I came back here.

Babaji Maharaj’s disappearance day was on the Sukla Caturthi of Shravan.



## **Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakura Prabhupada**

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### **Appearance in Puri Dhama**

On Friday, February 6, 1874 (Magh 25, 1280 Bengali, 1795 Saka), at 3:30 P.M., in the home of Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur, Om Vishnupada Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur appeared from the womb of Bhagavati Devi as an effulgent, golden-skinned child. It was Kṛṣṇa Pancami of the month of Magh. This house, named Narayan Chata, is situated not far from the Jagannath Temple on the Grand Road in Puri and was constantly reverberating with the sound of Harinama. Those who saw the newborn child were amazed to see that his umbilical cord was wrapped around his shoulder like a natural Brahmin thread. Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur named the child after Jagannath Deva's para sakti, Vimala, calling him Vimala-prasada (Bimala Prasad).

### **The child's preference**

Six months after the appearance of the child, it was time for the Rathayatra festival. That year, by Jagannath's desire, the cart stopped in front of Bhaktivinoda's house and simply would not move forward. Jagannath remained motionless before the Narayan Chata for three whole days. Under Bhaktivinoda

Thakur's direction, a kirtan festival was held in front of the Deity for the entire three-day period. During one of these days, the six-month old baby came before Jagannath in the arms of his mother, he grabbed Jagannath's feet and took the garland from around the Deity's neck. Bhaktivinoda gave the child Jagannath prasada for the Anna-prasana ritual in which a child eats its first solid food.

The child stayed in Purushottama Dhamam for ten months after his birth, after this he went with his mother in a palanquin by land to Ranaghat in Bengal. He went through his entire childhood in the midst of an extended festival of Harinama sankirtan.

### **Initiation in Harinama and Nrisingha-mantra**

While Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur was living in Srirampura (Serampore), he came back one day from a visit to Puri with a garland of tulasi leaves which had been used by Jagannath. He gave it to Bimala Prasad, who was a seventh grade student at the time, and initiated him in the chanting of the Holy Name and the Nrisingha mantra. While he was in the fifth grade, the boy had invented a type of phonetic writing which he called Bicanto, or vikṛnti. Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur read him his own Chaitanya-sikṣaṁṛta.

### **Worship of Kurmadeva**

In 1881, Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur started construction of Bhakti Bhavana in Calcutta's Ram Bagan district. While digging the foundations for the building, a small deity of Kurma was found. Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur taught his seven-year-old son the rules for worshiping a deity and the Kurma mantra, after which Bimala Prasad started to regularly wear tilaka and to perform the deity's puja. In 1885, a centre for publishing Vaishnava literature named "The Vaishnava Depository" was opened at Bhakti Bhavan. From this time, the boy started to gain experience with the printing press and helped with proofreading, etc. Srila

Bhaktivinoda Thakur resumed publishing his monthly magazine Sajjana-toṣaṇi in that year. He also travelled with his father to many of the Sripaṭas of some of Mahāprabhu's associates, such as Kulinagrama and Saptagram, where he heard his father lecture on the doctrines of the Holy Name.

### **Receives the title Siddhanta Saraswati**

When Bimala Prasad was a fifth grade student, he began to show a natural talent for mathematics and astrology. He went to study the astrological texts with the great scholar Mahesh-candra Cuṛamaṇi from the Siyakhala village on the Tarakesvara railway line. In a very short time he mastered the arts of calculating astrological charts. Later he went on to advanced studies of astrology with Aloya resident, Sundar Lal Paṇḍit.

Cuṛamaṇi Mahasaya was astounded by the talents of the fifteen year old boy. From this young age, he was called Sri Siddhanta Saraswati by his teachers. After taking sannyas in 1918, he took on the name Parivrajakacharya Sri Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati. At other times, he identified himself as Varṣabhanavi-dayita Das.

### **The World Vaishnava Association**

In 1885, which was 399 years after the appearance of Sri Chaitanya Mahāprabhu, Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur formed the Visva-vaiṣṇava Sabha or World Vaishnava Association at the home of Rama Gopal Basu in Krishnasimha Gali, which is today known as Bethune Row. The association organized the 400th anniversary celebrations of Mahāprabhu's appearance the following year. Some of its well-known members were Madana Gopal Goswami, Nilakanta Goswami, Vipina Vihari Goswami, Radhikanatha Goswami, Sisira Kumara Ghosh, etc. Sri Saraswati Thakur attended the Association's weekly meetings every Sunday in the company of his father, and carried his father's copy of

Bhakti-rasamṛta-sindhu for him. He would listen attentively to the discussion of scripture which took place at these meetings.

### **Distaste for bad company and material learning**

While Saraswati Thakur was a student, he never mixed with children who had behavior problems. Thus from his very earliest life, the determination to avoid asat-saṅga and to associate exclusively with saintly persons was evident in his character. In the early years of high school, he spent more time studying astrology and Vaishnava scriptures than the course subject matter. In fact he had a hard time maintaining interest in the school's text books. He considered it unnecessary to even touch these books once outside the school grounds. His reading material consisted mainly of Narottama's Prarthana and Prema-bhakti-candrika, and the books written by his father.

### **The August Assembly**

While still a student, Saraswati Thakur published Surya-siddhanta, Bhakti-bhavana-panjika, and other books related to astrology. In the afternoons, he would go to Calcutta's Beadon Square and engage in debate with other students about religion, politics and other subjects. In 1891, this debating society took the name "The August Assembly" and all its members had to promise to never get married. People of all ages, including the educated and respectable attended the Assembly's meetings.

### **At the Sanskrit College**

In 1892, Saraswati Thakur was admitted to the Calcutta Sanskrit College. There once again, instead of studying the books which were on the curriculum, he started systematically reading all the books in the library. He spent most of his time there studying the Veda with the scholar Pr̥thvidhara Sarma. Later, in 1898, when teaching Sanskrit at the Sarasvata Catuspāthi in Bhakti Bhavan, he studied Siddhanta-kaumudi with the same Pr̥thvidhara Sarma, and went through the entire text very quickly. Pr̥thvidhara Sarma advised him to devote his life to the study of Siddhanta-kaumudi and Sanskrit grammar, but Saraswati Thakur disagreed with him, saying that human life was meant for worshiping the Supreme Lord and not for studying children's grammar manuals with their verb roots and conjugations, nor for reading mundane poems.

While studying at the Sanskrit College, Saraswati Thakur also came into public disagreement with the opinions of the renowned scholar from Kashi, Vapudeva Sastri and the professor Pancanana Sahityacarya.

### **Saraswati Thakur abandons material learning**

Just as Mahāprabhu first engaged in student pastimes in which he took pleasure in study and debating, and then later turned to chanting and preaching the Holy Names, his eternal companion Saraswati Thakur also set the same example. In his autobiography, he wrote, “‘If I go on to study at the university, my family will inevitably harass me terribly to get married. On the other hand, if I present myself to the world as a useless fool, no one will try to interest me in that kind of life.’ This was the reasoning behind my quitting the Sanskrit College. I started seeking an honest means of making my livelihood by a minimum effort, just so that I could lead a life of devotion to the Lord.”

### **In Tripura**

In 1895, Saraswati Thakur took a job with the royal family of Tripura, which

was then an independent state. He was engaged as associate editor of the royal family's history, Raja-ratnakara. While there, he had the opportunity to study the major works held in the royal library. When the Maharaj Viracandra left this world on December 11, 1896, his son Radha Kisora Maṇikya Bahadura was placed on the throne. The new Maharaj engaged Saraswati Thakur as the Sanskrit and Bengali tutor for the crown prince Vrajendra Kisora. Later, he was sent to Calcutta with various responsibilities. When he wished to permanently leave the employ of the royal family in 1905, the Maharaj gave him a full pension equal to the salary which he had been earning. Saraswati Thakur received this pension until 1908.

### **Sarasvata Catuṣpaṭhi**

In 1897, the Sarasvata Catuṣpaṭhi Sanskrit school was established at the Bhakti Bhavan. Many educated and important people came there to study astrology, including Lala Hara Gauri Saṅkara, Dr. Ekendranatha Ghosh, M.B., Satakaṛi Caṭṭopadhyaya Siddhantabhuṣaṇa, Syamalala Goswami (the noted scholar of the Nityananda family), Saraccandra Jyotirvinoda, etc. From the Sarasvata Catuṣpaṭhi, Saraswati Thakur published the monthly magazines Jyotirvid and Bṛhaspati, as well as many ancient astrological works.

### **On pilgrimage with Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur**

In October of 1898, Saraswati Thakur set off on a pilgrimage with Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur during which they visited Kashi, Prayag, and on the way back, Gaya. While in Kashi, he met Rama Mishra Sastri, with whom he discussed many aspects of the Ramanuja sampradaya. On this occasion also, Saraswati Thakur began to show the spirit of renunciation which ran through his life. Starting in 1897, he had begun to follow the rules of Caturmasya according to the Vaishnava scriptures, cooking haviṣyanna (boiled food without salt or spices) himself which he would eat directly off the floor without using a plate

and sleeping on the ground without a pillow.

### **An investigation of the Sri-sampradaya**

Saraswati Thakur first started his study of the Ramanuja sampradaya while in Bengal and he published books and articles as the results of his research. In 1898, he wrote about Srinatha Muni, Yamunacharya and other acharyas of this school in a series of articles which appeared in Sajjana-toṣaṇi. Prior to this, he had books in the four South Indian languages provided to him by Sundaresvara Srauti, from which he learned about the Ramanuja and Madhva schools.

In 1899, he wrote articles on spiritual matters in the weekly magazine, Nivedana, and in 1900, he published a book, Baṅge Samajikata (“Bengali Social Customs”), a study of religious and social behavior in Bengal, which was the fruit of a great deal of research.

### **First encounter with his guru**

In 1897, Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur established his place of worship in Navadipa’s Godrumadvipa area, near the Saraswati River, and called it Ananda-sukhada Kunja. It was there, in 1898, that Saraswati Thakur first saw his future guru, Srila Gaura Kisora Das Babaji Maharaj. He was attracted by the extraordinary character of this Vaishnava paramahansa, who was indifferent to all social conventions, and later, in the month of Magh (January-February), 1900, on the order of Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur, took Bhagavati dikṣa from him.

### **Satasana Math and Bhakti-kuṭi**

In March of 1900, Saraswati Thakur accompanied Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur on a trip to Balesvara and Remuna, where he had darshan of Kṣīracora Gopinath. Then they travelled on to Bhuvanesvara and Puri. On this occasion, Saraswati Thakur deepened his attachment to the holy city of Puri. When he expressed a wish to establish a maṭh near the samadhi of Hari Das Thakur, the local sub-registrar, Jagabandhu Paṭṭanayaka and other prominent citizens asked him to take over the service of one of the seven seats of the Satasan Math, that of Giridhari. In 1902, Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur himself started construction of a residence not far from Hari Das Thakur's samadhi and named it Bhakti Kuṭī. During this time, Cossim Bazar's Maharaja, Maṇindra Candra Nandi Bahadur, in mourning at the loss of a loved one, came to live in a tent on the beach near to this site. He came frequently to hear Bhaktivinoda Thakur and Saraswati Thakur speak on the Vaishnava scriptures. Saraswati Thakur also regularly read and spoke on the Chaitanya Charitamrita in the presence of his father.

### **Collecting materials for Manjuṣa**

While in Puri, Saraswati Thakur engaged in collecting materials for his book Vaishnava-manjuṣa. He was introduced to the abbot of the Govardhana Math, Madhusudana Tirtha, with whom he had many philosophical discussions. Tirtha Svami held Saraswati Thakur in high esteem. Other people whom he met in Puri and with whom he engaged in scriptural discussions included Vasudeva Ramanuja Das and Damodar Ramanuja Das of Samadhi Math; Raghunandan Ramanuja Das of Emara Math, Jagannath Das of the Jamayet sampradaya's Papariya Math, Omkara Japi Vṛddha Tapasa of Svargadvarer Chata, the scholar Sadashiva Mishra, the lawyer Hariscandra Basu, Vihari Das Pujari of Ganga Mata's Math, Radhakanta Math's abbot Narottama Das, Anantacaraṇa Mahanti, etc.

During this time, he would preach door to door to prominent people in Puri, out of which many difficulties and dangers arose. Problems also came up in the responsibilities which he had accepted at the Giridhari Asana of Satasana Math. Saraswati Thakur showed the same attitude as Prahlad Maharaj, however,



demonstrating exemplary fortitude and turning a deaf ear to the foul-mouthed accusations made against him. In these circumstances, Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur advised him to go to Mayapur and worship in solitude, just as Ramanuja had done at TiruNarayanpura.

## **Mahatma Vamsi Das**

When he arrived in Nabadwip, Saraswati Thakur was introduced to Vamsi Das Babaji by Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur. Not long afterward, Caraṇa Das Babaji along with Kalna's Vishnu Das and many others, accompanied Saraswati Thakur on a kirtan party to Mahaprabhu's birthplace in Mayapur to participate in the Ḍola Purnima festival there. The following year, Caraṇa Das Babaji announced to Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur that he wished to take a party on a tour of Nabadwip Dhama every year. Unfortunately, his disappearance in 1906 made it impossible for him to carry out this wish.

## **Winning an astrological debate**

On January 2, 1902, Saraswati Thakur engaged in a debate on the beginning of the new year on the basis of the sun's precession with an accomplished student of Vapudeva Sastri. Ray Bahadur Rajendra Candra Sastri, President of the Royal Society, presided over the debate in which Saraswati Thakur so badly defeated his opponent that the latter's professor passed stool and urine in the assembly out of shock.

## **More pilgrimages**

In January of 1904, Saraswati Thakur visited Sitakuṇḍa and Candranatha. In December of the same year he went to Puri and on February 23, 1905, he went on a pilgrimage to South India. He visited Simhacalam, Rajahmundry, Madras, Perembadur, Tirupati, Conjeevaram, Kumbhakonam, Srirangam, Madurai, etc., before returning to Calcutta and Sri Mayapur. In Perembadur, he learned the scriptural rules and regulations surrounding Vaishnava tridaṇḍi-sannyasa from a member of that order in the Ramanuja sampradaya.

### **The vow to chant a billion Holy Names**

While staying in Mayapur in 1905, Saraswati Thakur began preaching the message of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and, following in the footsteps of Hari Das Thakur, he undertook a vow of chanting a billion (ten crores) of Holy Names, chanting a minimum of three lakhs (300,000) every single day. In 1906, Rohiṇi Kumara Ghosh, the nephew of Justice Candra Madhava Ghosh, had an extraordinary dream telling him to go to Saraswati Thakur and take initiation from him. Rohiṇi Kumara Ghosh thus became his first initiated disciple.

In 1909, Saraswati Thakur had a cottage (“Vraja-pattan”) built on the site of Chandrasekhara’s house where he continued to engage in his vrata, visualizing himself on the banks of Radha Kund.

### **Victorious in debate**

A crisis arose for the Vaishnava world in 1911. The Smarta Brahmanas were engaged in a concerted attack on the Vaishnava religion and its acharyas. Those who claimed descendance from Nityananda Prabhu and other associates of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu had taken the side of the Smartas in the hope of extracting some advantage from the alliance. Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur was bed-ridden at the time, so when an assembly of hundreds of scholars and paṇḍitas was called in Midnapore at Balighai village to debate the issues, he sent

Saraswati Thakur in his place. In the debate which was presided over by Visambharananda Deva Goswami, he was invited by Vrindavan scholar Madhusudana Goswami to speak. He read an article and gave a discourse on the distinction between Brahmins and Vaishnavas which completely destroyed the arguments of the materialistic karmi Smartas.

In the same year, at Bara Akhara in Nabadwip town, a debate was held on the Gaura-mantra. Saraswati Thakur established on the basis of the Atharvaveda's Caitanyopaniṣad and other scriptural evidence that a special mantra for worshiping Gauranga Mahaprabhu was eternally valid.

On March 23, 1912, Saraswati Thakur went to a religious conference held at Cossim Bazar where he gave a speech, establishing the characteristics of pure devotional service and criticizing the materialistic ambitions and sycophancy of those who claimed to be the leaders of the Gaudiya Vaishnava religion. In order to demonstrate non-cooperation with these so-called leaders of the school, he fasted for the four days he was there before returning to Mayapur where he resumed taking prasada.

### **Pilgrimage through the Gauḍa Maṇḍala**

On November 4, 1912, Saraswati Thakur took a small group of devotees on a tour of Srikhaṇḍa, Jajigrama, Katwa, Jhamatpura, mAkai Haṭ, Cakhaṇḍi, Dm̐ai Haṭ and other places where Mahaprabhu's associates had had their homes. In every place he preached the gospel of pure devotional service.

### **The publication of Anubhaṣya**

In April of 1913, Saraswati Thakur established a publishing house named Bhagavata Yantralaya in Calcutta's Kalighat area. The first book printed was Chaitanya Charitamrita with his Anubhaṣya commentary. Others which followed

were the Bhagavad-gita with Vishvanath's commentary and the maha-kavya, Gaurakṛṣṇodaya of the Orissan poet, Govinda Das.

After Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur's disappearance on June 23, 1914, Saraswati Thakur took over the editorship of Sajjana-toṣaṇi, the monthly magazine founded by his father. In January of 1915, the press was moved to Vraja-pattana in Mayapur and more books continued to be printed. On June 14, 1915, the Anubhaṣya commentary to Chaitanya Charitamrita was completed at Vraja-pattana. In July of 1915, the printing press was again moved to Krishnanagara, and Sajjana-toṣaṇi and various books written by Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur were published from there.

### **The disappearance of Gaura Kisora Das Babaji**

On November 17, 1915, Utthana Ekadasi, Srila Gaura Kisora Das Babaji entered into his eternal pastimes. Saraswati Thakur performed his last rites according to the prescriptions of Gopal Bhatta's Saṁskara-dipika, establishing the samadhi of his guru in the Nutana Caṛa neighborhood of old Kuliya (the present-day town of Nabadwip).

### **Saraswati Thakur takes Tridaṇḍi-sannyasa**

On March 7, 1918, on the occasion of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's appearance day, Saraswati Thakur took tridaṇḍi-sannyasa in Sri Mayapur. Although as an eternally perfected soul, he had already achieved the goals of the renounced order, he took this step in order to preach the gospel of Lord Chaitanya everywhere without restriction, to crystallize the conception of the daiva-varṇasrama social system, and to demonstrate the transcendental character of the paramahansa (babaji) dress taken by his gurus, Jagannath Das, Saccidananda Bhaktivinoda Thakur and Gaura Kisora Das Babaji.

On the same day, he consecrated the deities of Guru-Gauranga and Radha-Govinda at the house of Chandrasekhara Acharya and established the Sri Chaitanya Math. The Sri Chaitanya Math became the headquarters for the branch Gaudiya Maths throughout the world, the flagship of which is situated in Calcutta.

At the end of March, Saraswati Thakur gave a exhaustively researched lecture on Vaishnava philosophy in the Krishnanagara town hall. In May, he went to Daulatpur and other places to preach Harikatha.

### **Visit to Sri Kṣetra**

From June 2-23, Saraswati Thakur and a group of devotees left Calcutta for Puri. They stopped at Sauri, Kuamara and other places along the way to preach. As they followed the route Mahaprabhu had taken to Puri, Saraswati Thakur was overcome with ecstatic feelings of separation from the Lord. The party stopped at Remuna where they saw Gopinath and then at Balesvara where he gave a lecture on Mahaprabhu's Sikṣaṣṭaka to the town's Haribhakti-pradayini Sabha. He was welcomed to Balesvara by the Subdivisional Magistrate, Ray Saheb Gaura Syama Mahanti and other distinguished personalities of the town. At Cuttack, he was invited by Diwan Bahadur Sri Krishna Mahapatra to stay at his home and preach on the Bhagavat there. Then in Puri, the party stayed at Bhakti Kuṭi and did the parikrama of Sri Kṣetra Maṇḍala. Once again, Saraswati Thakur was in a state of ecstatic separation the whole time.

The former Collector and present Deputy Magistrate of Puri Aṭala Vihari Maitra had heard Saraswati Thakur explain Chaitanya Charitamrita and Srimad Bhagavatam. In a great meeting held on the grounds of Harivallabha Basu Ray Bahadur's house, Sasi Bhavana, Saraswati Thakur gave a lecture on the difference between personal and impersonal conceptions of the Absolute Truth. He wrote a Sanskrit poem of a few verses about the memorial to Mahaprabhu's lotus feet enshrined in the Jagannath temple.

## **Silencing enemy tongues**

In August and September of 1918, a spokesman for a group of atheists with little philosophical knowledge sent a list of 29 questions challenging the Vaishnava faith and its acharyas. Saraswati Thakur silenced these critics with answers based on logic and scripture. The questions and his answers were published in a pamphlet named Pratiper prasnere pratyuttara, “Answering the enemy’s questions”.

## **Bhaktivinoda Asana and Visva Vaishnava Rajasabha**

To increase the preaching activity in Calcutta, in November of 1918, Saraswati Thakur established a center at 1, Ultadingi Junction Road, which he named Sri Bhaktivinoda Asana. From there, he travelled to various towns in Jessore and Khulna districts. On February 5, 1919, he reestablished the World Vaishnava Association under the name Visva Vaishnava Rajasabha at the Bhaktivinoda Asana. On June 27, 1919, he consecrated a deity of Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur at Svananda-sukhada Kunja in Godrumadvipa. The first month-long kirtan festival was held at the Bhaktivinoda Asana from August 18 to September 18, 1919.

## **Preaching in East Bengal**

On October 4, 1919, on the appearance day of Madhvacharya, Saraswati Thakur set off on a preaching trip to north and eastern Bengal. In April of 1920, he and the other leaders of the Visva Vaishnava Rajasabha sent a letter with seven questions to the Maharaj of Cossim Bazar’s annual convocation of Vaishnava scholars, challenging them to clarify the distinction between pure and blemished devotion.

Six years to the day after the disappearance of Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur, on June 23, 1920, Saraswati Thakur's mother Bhagavati Devi left for her eternal abode.

## **The first Gaudiya Math**

On September 6, 1920, deities of Guru and Gauranga, Radha and Govinda, were installed at the Bhaktivinoda Asana and the first Gaudiya Math was established at that time.

## **Vaishnava Manjuṣa**

At the request of Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur and Sisira Kumara Ghosh, Saraswati Thakur had been working on the compilation of a Vaishnava encyclopedia, for which he had travelled throughout India. In October of 1920, he came to Cossim Bazar at the invitation of Maharaj Sir Maṇindra Candra Nandi Bahadur whom he described the scope of this Vaishnava encyclopedia. The Maharaj agreed to donate a monthly stipend for the publication of the encyclopedia, but in the end was unable to fulfill his commitments. Saraswati Thakur left Cossim Bazar and went with his party to Saidabad, Nowallis Para, Kheturi and other places in the area that had been blessed by the touch of Mahaprabhu's associates. Everywhere he went, he preached Mahaprabhu's message.

## **The first sannyas disciple**

On November 1, 1920, Saraswati Thakur initiated Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur's disciple Jagadisa Bhakti-pradipa, Vaishnava-siddhanta-bhuṣaṇa, Sampradaya-vaibhavacharya, B.A., in the renounced order as a tridaṇḍi-sannyasa. He was thus the first member of the order in the Visva Vaishnava Raja Sabha and was known thenceforth as Tridaṇḍi Svami Bhakti-pradipa Tirtha Maharaj.

On March 14, 1921, Saraswati Thakur revived the annual parikrama or tour of Nabadwip Dhama. At the end of March, he left again for Puri on a preaching trip. Meanwhile, H. H. Bhakti-pradipa Tirtha Maharaj published a book Acara o Acharya ("Standards of conduct and the spiritual master") which caused a great stir amongst the caste Goswamis, most of whom acted as gurus professionally.

### **Preaching and establishing Maths in East Bengal**

Afterwards, Saraswati Thakur visited Dhanbad, Katrasgarh and Dhaka. In Dhaka, he spoke on the janmady asya verse of the Bhagavat for an entire month, explaining it in thirty different ways. On October 13, 1921, he established the Madhva Gaudiya Math in Dhaka. On October 31, deities were installed and a great feast held in their honor. From Dhaka, he went on to Mymensingh for preaching.

After this, he returned to Nabadwip where he reestablished the worship of Gaura Gadadhara at Champa Hati, as well as a deity installation at the birthplace of Vrindavan Das Thakur in Modadrumadvipa. Then he returned to Calcutta to preach there and in the surrounding area.

### **Sri Purushottam Math**

According to Vedavyasa, hy utkale puruṣottamat, the pure message of the Vaishnava religion would spread out of Jagannath Puri. In order to do honor to this prediction, Saraswati Thakur established the Sri Purushottam Math at Bhakti



Kuṭi on June 9, 1922, installing a deity of Gaurāṅga Mahāprabhu. Then, in the spirit of Mahāprabhu, he and his followers participated in the cleaning of Gundicha, did the parikrama of Jagannath Puri and went to Alalanath during Jagannath's anavasara period when his is taken off the temple altar. He established an annual memorial festival at the Purushottam Math in honor of Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur and Srila Gadadhara Pandit Goswami.

He also sent disciples to Cuttack, Baripada, Kuwamara, Udala, Kaptipada, and Nilgiri, etc., to preach Mahāprabhu's gospel of pure devotion.

### **Gaudiya magazine**

On August 19, 1922, the monthly magazine and organ of the Gaudiya Math, the Gaudiya, was published for the first time from the Bhagavata Press.

### **Visit to Vraja Maṇḍala**

On September 28, 1922, Saraswati Thakur left for Vrindavan with the intention of establishing a preaching centre. Accompanied by his disciples, he visited Mathura, Vrindavan and Radha Kuṇḍ, etc. He gave a speech on Mahāprabhu's teachings and the Vaishnava religion at an assembly of learned Vaishnavas at Lala Babu's temple in Vrindavan.

A few days later, during the month of Karttik, he came to Dhaka where he once again delineated the true character of devotional service. After this he went to Kuliya where he revealed the site where Mahāprabhu forgave Devananda Pandit and Capala Gopal for their offenses. From there, he went on to the Santal Paragana to preach Harikatha.

## **The construction of the temple at the Chaitanya Math**

On the appearance day of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, March 2, 1923, work began on the construction of a temple at the Chaitanya Math. It was to be built according to an idea of Saraswati Thakur in which the deities of Guru-Gauranga and Radha-Govinda would be installed in the main deity room, while in the four corners the founders of the four sampradayas (Lakshmi, Brahma, Rudra, the four Kumaras) with their acharyas (Ramanuja, Madhva, Vishnusvami, Nimbarka) would be installed.

### **In Puri**

After preaching in West and East Bengal, Saraswati Thakur returned again to Puri for the annual festival and, emulating the pastimes of Mahaprabhu in separation from Krishna, danced in front of the Rathayatra cart. He also preached to large numbers of devotees, including Raja Maṇindra Candra Nandi, Sasimohana Goswami of Bhadrak, etc. He sent preachers to Mayurbhanj and Madras to spread Mahaprabhu's gospel and himself took a party of devotees to Amalajora in Burdwan and then to Banari Para in Barisal district.

### **Preaching the Bhagavat**

In 1923, just before the annual festival at the Gaudiya Math in Calcutta, the Gaudiya Printing Works were established and the first fascicules of the Srimad Bhagavatam were published with the Gaura Kisoranvaya (word by word translation), Svananda-kunjanuvada (translation), and the Anantagopala Tathya and Sindhu-vaibhava commentaries.

## **Vyasa Puja**

On February 24, 1924, on the tithi commemorating the 50th anniversary of Saraswati Thakur's appearance in the world, the first Vyasa Puja in his honor was held at the Calcutta Gaudiya Math. The speech that he gave on that occasion stands as an immortal jewel in the history of Vaishnava literature.

Not long thereafter, on the occasion of Mahaprabhu's appearance day, the first edition of the Chaitanya Bhagavat was published from the Madhva Gaudiya Math in Dhaka.

## **Tridaṇḍi Math and Sarasvata Asana**

On July 9, 1924, Saraswati Thakur established the Tridaṇḍi Math in Bhuvanesvara in Orissa. From there he went to preach in the Madras presidency where he established the Sarasvata Asana. There he gave extensive instruction to his disciples from Bhaktivinoda Thakur's books. In the first part of September of the same year, many distinguished persons came to hear him speak, including Raut Ray of Mayurbhanj, His Excellency General Jaṅg Bahadur of Nepal, Justice Manmathanatha Mukhopadhyaya, etc.

In October, he set foot in Dhaka for the fifth time and spoke extensively on Madhvacharya's life and the Madhva sampradaya, giving a learned explanation of the differences between the Madhva and Gaudiya doctrines, especially underlining Madhva's vision of varṇasrama dharma.

## **At the Benares Hindu University**

On December 16, Saraswati Thakur came to the Benares Hindu University to

lecture on the place of Vaiṣṇavism in the world's religions. Amongst those in the audience who greeted his lecture with enthusiasm were the director of the Department of Western Philosophy, Pramathanatha Tarkabhuṣaṇa, Professor Phaṇibhuṣaṇa Adhikari, M.A., etc. Afterwards, he and his followers went to places in Kashi visited by Mahāprabhu, then to Prayag, where he indicated the exact spot where Rupa Goswami had taken instruction from Mahāprabhu, and then to Aṛail, where Mahāprabhu had met with Vallabhacharya.

### **Tour of Gauḍa Maṇḍala**

On January 29, 1925, Saraswati Thakur took a large group of devotees on a tour of Gauḍa Maṇḍala to visit the various sites made holy by Mahāprabhu and his associates. Overcome with the mood of devotional fervor inspired by them, he lectured on bhakti in all these places.

In the same year, during the Nabadwip Parikrama, deities of Radha Govinda were carried on the back of an elephant through the streets of Koladvipa. The envious leaders of those in the guru business incited a number of ruffians to throw bricks at the deities and the devotees who were accompanying them, including Saraswati Thakur, at Poṛa Ma Tola. One witness of the event was quoted in the next day's (Phalgunā 24, 1331) Ananda Bazar Patrika as saying, "Today I witnessed the same pastime that was enacted about four hundred years ago when Nabadwip's constables, two thugs named Jagai and Madhai, tried to do injury to Nityananda Avadhuta."

### **Madan Mohan Malaviya**

On April 17, 1925, Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, the leader of the Hindu Mahasabha, a nationalist organization, came to the Calcutta Gaudiya Math and heard Saraswati Thakur explain the daiva-varṇasrama system according to the book, Agama-pramānya. Saraswati Thakur sent preachers to Sylhet and other

places.

## **Bhagavata-janananda Math**

In 1926, a three-day sacrifice to the Holy Name was performed to commemorate the appearance of Nityananda Prabhu. This subsequently became an annual tradition. In April of the same year, a math was founded in Ciruliya (Midnapore), and given the name Bhagavata-janananda Math. Now possessed of an increasing number of Tridaṇḍi sannyasis, Saraswati Thakur sent them throughout India to preach the message of pure devotion, while he himself spoke and lectured through Midnapore. This is the time when the large-scale expansion of the Gaudiya Math really started.

## **Travelling and preaching through India**

In the beginning of November 1926, Saraswati Thakur started on a trip throughout India, when he would meet with various learned persons to discuss scriptures and gather information. He was also, of course, preaching Krishna consciousness to the people in large assemblies. The acharyas of many schools acclaimed him as the leading acharya of the Gaudiya Vaishnava school. The Mahanta of Nathadvara, Gokulanatha Goswami Maharaj of Bombay, the abbot of the Uḍipi monastery of the Madhva sampradaya and the abbot of the Salimabad seat of the Madhva sampradaya all received him with the honor due the spiritual master of a Vaishnava sampradaya.

While on this trip, he established a Math in Naimiṣaraṇya called Paramahansa Math. Upon his return, he opened the Paravidya Piṭh school in Mayapur, as well as the newly completed 29 towered temple at the Chaitanya Math. Deities of the acharyas and Radha Govinda were installed there.

## **The Harmonist**

In 1927, Saraswati Thakur started publishing Sajjana-toṣaṇi in three languages -- English, Sanskrit and Hindi. The English edition was given the name The Harmonist. On September 17, 1927, in Dumurakonda in Manbhoom district, the Chaitanya Gaudiya Math was founded.

At the end of September, Saraswati Thakur set out again on a preaching tour of northern India. In 1928, during the Gaudiya Math festival period, he spoke at Calcutta's Albert Hall and in other public places in the city to give access to Mahaprabhu's message to the common people. The fourth edition of the Chaitanya Charitamrita was published. On September 26, the foundations of the Bagh Bazar Gaudiya Math were laid near the banks of the Ganges. On October 7, he went with a large party of devotees to Assam, where he spoke in Shillong to several large assemblies. Amongst those who came to hear him explain the unexcelled doctrines of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu was the prince Saradindu Narayan Ray.

## **At Kurukṣetra for the solar eclipse**

On November 4, in order to experience the mood of separation that was experienced by the gopis and by Mahaprabhu during the Rathayatra, Saraswati Thakur went with a party of devotees to Kurukṣetra at the time of a solar eclipse. Hundreds of thousands of pilgrims who had also come there had the good fortune to hear the Gaudiya Math devotees singing the names of Gaura. Deities of Gauranga were installed at the Sri Vyasa Gaudiya Math and a spiritual diorama exhibition (the Bhagavata Pradarsini) was opened.

## **The opening of the Ekayana Math**

On December 30, the great scholar Pramathanatha Tarkabhuṣaṇa came to the Gaudiya Math and heard an extended explanation of the daiva-varṇasrama system from Saraswati Thakur. In January of 1929, Saraswati Thakur established the Ekayana Gaudiya Math in Krishnanagara. At the opening ceremony, he gave a lecture with an original explanation showing that the single path of exclusive devotion (ekayana) is the trunk and the various other paths (bahvayana) are the branches of the Vedic tree.

On January 14, 1929, Saraswati Thakur met the Ohio State University professor, Albert E. Suthers, and explained to him how the Vaishnava religion was an extended and perfect Christianity. On January 16, he was in New Delhi to open the Delhi Gaudiya Math and with it the opportunity to preach Mahaprabhu's gospel to thousands of respectable persons in India's capital.

### **A speech in the Krishnanagara town hall**

On March 30, 1929, Saraswati Thakur gave a lecture on the Holy Name in the Rama Gopal Town Hall building. In May of the same year, he was in Puri where he started Gaurasundara's Candana-yatra festival. At the same time, he started repair work on the Alalanath temple. On August 12, he spoke at Calcutta's Albert Hall on the Gaudiya philosophy.

### **Shrines of Mahaprabhu's footprints**

It was Saraswati Thakur's wish to establish 108 shrines throughout India as memorials to the places Mahaprabhu had sanctified by the touch of his feet. These shrines or pada-piṭhas would house prints of Gaurasundara's feet stamped in marble. For this purpose, he went to Kanair Naṭasala on October 13, 1929, and to Mandara two days later. From there he went on to Rajmahal, Bhagalpur, Nalanda, Rajgiri, etc., to preach Mahaprabhu's message. Then he went on to Kashi where he discoursed on Mahaprabhu's teachings to Sanatan Goswami.

He was welcomed by many educated and respectable people to Kashi, Faizabad, Ayodhya, Naimiṣaraṇya, Karauna, Misrik, Sitapura, Lucknow. Many seekers of the truth were initiated by him into the religion of pure devotion. The widely-renowned bar-at-law, Mr. A. P. Sen, the professor Dr. Radhakumuda Mukhopadhyaya, Dr. Radhakamala Mukhopadhyaya, Dr. A. N. Sen Gupta, and many other highly regarded citizens came to hear him speak.

### **The Sri Mayapur post office**

On June 1, 1929, a temporary post office was opened at Sri Mayapur and made into a permanent branch in October. During this time, he had his devotees establish the “Lord’s garden” (Ishodyan) that Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur had desired in Mayapur. He also had electricity brought to Mayapur and electric lights placed on the pinnacle of the Chaitanya Math temple.

### **Mahamahopadhyaya Haraprasada Sastri**

On January 8, 1930, the great scholar Dr. Haraprasada Sastri visited Saraswati Thakur and discussed many matters with him about the history of the various Vaishnava sampradayas including the Gaudiya, the dates of many acharyas, the Pancaratra, and Sri Chaitanya.

In the middle of January, he went to the Purṇa Kumbha Mela in Prayag. He engaged the Chaitanya Math’s preachers in talking about Mahaprabhu’s teachings to Rupa Goswami. He installed deities of Radha Govinda, the life and soul of Sri Rupa Goswami, at the confluence of the three rivers, Triveni. By the grace of the best of Rupa Goswami’s followers, the pilgrims who came to Prayag to bathe in the confluence of the holy rivers were fortunate to be able to hear the message of pure devotion.



## **Exhibition in Sri Dham Mayapur**

From February 3 to March 17, 1930, an unprecedented spiritual diorama exhibition was held in Nabadwip-Mayapur. The famous chemist, Dr. Prafulla Chandra Roy, opened the exhibition. On February 18, on the occasion of Vyasa Puja, a shrine to the feet of the acharya was inaugurated at the Chaitanya Math.

On May 4, Mr. I. H. Napier came to hear about Indian spiritual philosophy from Saraswati Thakur. On May 25, Saraswati Thakur went to Chatrabhoga, a place that Mahaprabhu visited on his way to Puri and blessed many seekers of the truth. In July, he went to the Saccidananda Math in Cuttack and spoke on Krishna to both learned and general audiences. On August 22, he travelled to Allahabad where he stayed with his party at the house of retired Sessions Judge, Manomohan Sannyal. He spoke there for several days, attracting Mr. Sannyal to Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's lotus feet. He also resolved many of the questions asked by educated citizens of the town, especially Professor Dr. P. K. Acharya.

## **Spiritual assembly**

On October 5, 1930, the move with the devotees and deities was made from the Ultadingi Junction Road Math to the new buildings at Bagh Bazar. At the same time, a festival in honor of Radha-Madanamohana, Radha Govinda and Radha Gopinath. A transcendental diorama exhibition was also opened and a great spiritual conference was called at the same time. The chief contributor to the construction of the temple, Jagabandhu Bhakti-ranjana, died on November 19 of the same year.

On December 25, Saraswati Thakur was in Jajpur; on the 26th, in Kurmaksetra; on the 27th in Simhacala; Kovvur on the 29th and on the 31st in Mangalagiri. In all these places, he installed shrines of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's lotus feet and preached his gospel. Sir P. S. Shivasvami Iyer, K.C.S.I., 12116 Knight Commander of the Star of India. 12116 Dr. U. Ramrao, and P. N. Subrahmanya Iyer were among the distinguished persons who were

attracted by Saraswati Thakur's preaching.

### **The Bhaktivinode Institute**

On April 3, 1931, Saraswati Thakur opened the Bhaktivinode Institute in Sri Mayapur, and to the large assembly of people present for the occasion, spoke on the difference between material and spiritual knowledge. On May 3, he went to Darjeeling to preach in that district. On June 28, he officially accepted responsibility for the management of the Sripaṭa of Nityananda Prabhu's associate, Mahesh Pandit, in Chakdaha. At the opening ceremonies, he spoke to a large crowd of seekers.

On July 12, he installed the deity of Gauranga named Gaudiyanatha at the Brahma-Gaudiya Math in Alalanath. Five days later, he set the foundations of the Purushottam Math temple on land which had been donated by the Maharaj of Mayurbhanj. From there he went on to Cuttack where he spoke on Krishna at the Saccidananda Math. He sent a party of preachers to Simla in northern India.

On July 30, he spoke Harikatha to an audience including the well-known professor Kalidas Nag of Calcutta University at the Bagh Bazar Gaudiya Math. On September 5, Honorable Justice Manmathanatha Mukhopadhyaya came to listen to Saraswati Thakur speak at the Gaudiya Math.

### **The spiritual education exhibition in Calcutta**

At the time of the Gaudiya Math's annual festival, on September 6, Saraswati Thakur opened a spiritual education exhibition (Sat-sikṣa Pradarsini) in Calcutta. Over the next few weeks, some of the prominent people who came to hear him speak were Dr. Dinesh Chandra Sen Ray Bahadur, Biraj Mohan Mazumdar, Vice Principal of Institutional College, German world-traveller and scholar, Dr. Magnus Hirschfeld, and Dr. Stella Kremrisch of Calcutta University, etc.

Saraswati Thakur spoke at the Gaudiya Math's many festivals. On September 29, he spoke on the nature of spiritual sound to the principal of the Calcutta Medical College, Colonel Dvarakaprasada Goyel, I.M.S. and the American traveller and scholar A. J. Jacobs. On October 11, in Prayag he met Allahabad University Vice Chancellor, Dr. Ganganatha Jha, Allahabad District Commissioner, Vinayaka Saṅkara Mehta, I.C.S. and answered their questions on spiritual life.

### **The Hindi magazine, Bhagavat**

On October 16, Saraswati Thakur was welcomed to Benares by its distinguished citizens and stayed and spoke at the Maharaj's Mint Palace. On the 19th and 20th, he spoke at length on Vaishnava philosophy and Krishna-lila to Deputy Accountant and General of Bengal man of letters, Vasanta Kumara Caṭṭopadhyaya. From there he went on to Lucknow on Oct. 31, and then to Naimiṣaraṇya, where on November 9 he introduced the new Hindi fortnightly, Bhagavat, published from the Paramahansa Math.

On November 14, Saraswati Thakur sent preachers to New Delhi to tell the Viceroy, Lord Willingdon, about the Math's preaching activities. On November 17, he established the annual festival at the Delhi Gaudiya Math and spoke to many distinguished personalities about the life of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. He also gave a speech about bhakti at the Gurudwar Bungalow Saheb Hall in New Delhi. On November 29, a great spiritual assembly in the garden of Honorable Council of State member, Ray Bahadur Lala Jagadish Prasad, at which Saraswati Thakur gave a speech. Then on November 30, he went with his entourage to Sukaratala the place where Suka first narrated the Bhagavatam, and himself spoke from the Bhagavatam there.

On December 6, he installed Radha-Govinda deities in the Delhi Gaudiya Math. On the 9th, he came to Calcutta to speak at the first annual memorial service in honor of Jagabandhu Bhakti-ranjana, the builder of the Bagh Bazar Gaudiya Math buildings. The Honorable Justice Manmathanatha Mukhopadhyaya presided over the assembly. On the 13th, Mr. Mukhopadhyaya visited Mayapur where he again heard Saraswati Thakur speak. He also visited

the Dhama and the Bhaktivinode Institute.

## **Preaching in Madras**

On January 10, 1932, Saraswati Thakur went with a party of twenty devotees to Madras. A large group of devotees and dignitaries, including Madras Corporation President, T. S. Ramasvami Iyer, the Honorable T. Rajan, Mr. S. V. Ramasvami Mudaliyar, the honorable Diwan Bahadur, G. Narayan Svami Ceṭṭiyar, C.I.E. [Companion of the Indian Empire], and T. Punurulla Pillai, etc., greeted him at the Basin Bridge Station and accompanied him in a huge sankirtan procession back to the Gaudiya Math which at that time was situated in the North Gopalpuram neighborhood. In the assembly which followed, the honorable Diwan Bahadur Kumarasvami Reḍḍiyar offered a speech in which he indicated the depth of his esteem for the acharya, Saraswati Thakur.

On January 14, Madras High Court Justice, Diwan Bahadur Sundaram Ceṭṭiyar visited Saraswati Thakur at the Madras Gaudiya Math and was satisfied by answers to his questions on spiritual matters. On January 23, deities were installed in the Madras Gaudiya Math. On the same day, the cornerstone for a new Math was laid in the Rayapetṭa district. On January 24, a huge meeting was held with many important personalities as guests, including Sir P. S. Shivasvami Iyer. Saraswati Thakur spoke and attracted many of these people to Mahaprabhu's teachings. On January 27, the governor of Madras Presidency, Sir George Frederick Stanley, laid the cornerstone for the Sri Krishna Kirtana Hall at the Madras Gaudiya Math.

On January 29, Madras City Corporation gave an official welcome to Saraswati Thakur. He gave a speech of thanks in the Corporation's Rippon Building.

On the 30th, Saraswati Thakur went to the town of Eluru in the West Godavari district, where he was greeted by a huge sankirtan party of townspeople. He received an official letter of welcome from the Janardana Prarthana Samaj. He gave a speech and then initiated and inspired a large number of people from that region in the practice of pure devotional service. On

his 58th birthday, he wrote a speech which was sent to Calcutta to be read at the Vyasa Puja festivities there.

He returned to Mayapur before the 1932 Nabadwip Parikrama. On the occasion of Mahaprabhu's appearance day, he laid the cornerstone for a new temple building at Advaita Acharya's house. He gave a speech at the annual meeting of the Sridhama Pracariṇi Sabha as well as instituting the examinations for Bhakti-sastri and Bhakti-vaibhavacarya. On April 3, he presided over the annual award-giving ceremony at the Bhaktivinode Institute where he gave a speech on "Altruism and Extended Altruism".

### **Madras, Udagamandalam, Mysore and Kovvur**

On May 23, 1932, Saraswati Thakur returned to Madras. This time he had the opportunity to explain the particularities of the Gaudiya Vaishnava sampradaya to the religious leaders and scholars of the Saṅkara, Ramanuja and Madhva schools. On May 25, he spoke to a group of questioners led by Prof. K. Pancapagesasan of Paḍukoṭ College, and was able to settle their doubts. On May 29, he was welcomed to Combatoire by its citizens. He spoke there and on the banks of the Bhavani River to the people of the town of Mettuppalaiyam. From there he went to Udugamandalam in the Nilgiri Hills, where he stayed at the Raṅgavilas Bhavan. He stayed there long enough to revise Prof. Nishikanta Sannyal's English book, Sri Krishna Chaitanya, as well as completing his own English translation of Brahma-saṁhita, his Gaudiya Bhaṣya commentary on the Chaitanya Bhagavat, and a short English book on the life of Ramananda Raya.

While in Udagamandalam, several distinguished people came to visit him and had the opportunity to hear his teachings through his principal disciples. They included the Nizam of Hyderabad's prime minister, Sir Kiṣāṇa Prasada, G.C.I.E. (Knight and Grand Commander of the Indian Empire), Hyderabad zamindar Dhanaraja Girji, Sir P. S. Shivasvami Aiyer, and the honorable Diwan Bahadur P. Munisvami Naidu.

On June 17, the Maharaj of Mysore, Sir Krishnaraja Wadhiyar, G.C.S.I. [Knight and Grand Commander of the Star of India], G.B.E. [Grand Cross of the

British Empire] invited Saraswati Thakur and his disciples to Mysore where they stayed as his guests in the Rama Mandira and tirelessly preached the Chaitanya Gospel throughout the area. On the way from Udagamandalam to Mysore, Saraswati Thakur visited various places such as the Lingayat temple to Kaṇṭhesvara and the Madhva Math, etc., in Nanjangud. On June 19, Saraswati Thakur visited Krishnaraja Sagara and Sriraṅgapattanam (20 km north of Mysore). In the morning on June 20, Saraswati Thakur visited the Mysore Sanskrit College and spoke to the professors on Krishna consciousness. That afternoon he was invited to the Maharaj's palace where he gave a discourse on Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and answered the Maharaj's questions.

From there he went to Kovvur, the place on the banks of the Godavari where Mahaprabhu met with Ramananda Raya for the first time. On July 5, he installed deities at the Ramananda Gaudiya Math. Hundreds of thousands of people come around that time to take bath in the Godavari on the occasion of the Puṣkara-yoga and were blessed by the chance to hear the chanting of Gauranga's names. Saraswati Thakur spoke on the gradual process of spiritual life and its ultimate goal to the educated people of the locality.

### **Gaura Kisora Das's samadhi is transferred**

By August 16, Saraswati Thakur had returned to Calcutta and Sir Devaprasada Sarvadhikari came to hear him speak on "Sri Chaitanya-prema". On the 28th, during the annual festival held at the Gaudiya Math, he gave a lecture entitled "Relative Worlds".

On August 21, 1932, upon hearing that the samadhi tomb of his guru Srila Gaura Kisora Das Babaji Maharaj, was about to fall into the Ganges, Saraswati Thakur sent disciples to arrange to have his transcendental remains transferred in their entirety to the Chaitanya Math in Mayapur.

In the beginning of September, publication of a monthly magazine in the Assamese language, Kirtana, was begun on his orders out of the town of Dhuburi. On September 3, Saraswati Thakur gave a lecture entitled "The Ultimate Goal of Life" at the Calcutta Gaudiya Math. On the 4th, Calcutta

University professor Suniti Caṭṭopadhyaya and Nadiya District Magistrate T. C. Ray came to the Gaudiya Math to hear him speak. On the 11th, he gave a lecture on the Vedānta. These three lectures were later published. Then on the 16th, he came to Mayapur to inaugurate the samadhi temple of Gaura Kisorā Das Babajī.

### **Vraja Maṇḍala Parikrama**

On October 9, the appearance day of Śrī Madhvacharya, Sarasvatī Thakur and countless devotees undertook the 84 kos pilgrimage tour of Vraja-maṇḍala. Stopping at every place where Kṛṣṇa had engaged in his pastimes, Sarasvatī Thakur and his disciples preached in various different languages for the benefit of the devotees who had come from many different places. He himself lectured on Rupa Goswami's Upadeśamṛta to a large assembly of Vraja residents and scholars, .

On November 4, after finishing the parikrama, he went to Haridvara-Mayapur where he laid the cornerstone for the Śrī Sarasvatī Gaudiya Math. Then on Nov. 21, in Prayag, the cornerstone for the Śrī Rupa Gaudiya Math was laid at his invitation and in his presence by the governor of the United Provinces, Sir William Malcolm Haley. On the 24th, deities of Rādhā and Govindā were installed in the Sanatan Gaudiya Math in Benares.

On November 27, the second annual memorial festival in honor of Jagabandhu Bhaktirājana was held, with Sir Manmathanātha Rayacaudhuri Rājā Bahadur presiding at the meeting. On December 4, Kṛṣṇanagara College professor Sudhindu Kumara Das and Viśambhara Vyākaraṇatīrtha, Vedāntasāstri of Rādhakānta Math in Puri came to Mayapur where they learned much about the different Vaiṣṇava sampradāyas throughout India.

### **An spiritual educational exhibition in Dhaka**

On December 12, Saraswati Thakur came to Dhaka to open a diorama exhibition. He remained there for longer than a month, until January 30, 1933, during which time many of the most respectable members of the learned community came to see him and hear his teachings. The diorama exhibition, which had spiritual education as its theme, unprecedented in Dhaka, was opened on January 6. His lecture on that occasion, entitled “Exhibition speech”, created a change in the ideas of his listeners about the true nature of religion and its doctrines.

On February 2, on his return to the Calcutta Gaudiya Math, he explained the difference between eka-daṇḍa sannyas and tri-daṇḍa sannyas after being questioned on the subject by Howrah’s Narasingh College’s dean, Satisacandra De, and Professor Raṇada Caraṇa Chakravarti. On the 8th, he went to Sri Mayapur to celebrate Nityananda’s appearance day, Vyasa Puja and the appearance day of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu.

### **Preaching envoys to Europe**

On Mahaprabhu’s appearance day, 1933, Prof. Nishikanta Sannyal’s English-language book, Shri Krishna Chaitanya, was released for distribution. After this event, Saraswati Thakur decided that it was now time to preach Mahaprabhu’s message in Europe. He selected three preachers for the job: H. H. Bhaktipradipa Tirtha Maharaj, H. H. Bhakti-hṛdaya Vana (Bon) Maharaj, and Sambidananda Das, M. A., Bhakti-Sastri and on March 18, in a meeting presided over by Yatindranatha Basu M.L.C [Member of Legislative Council], Saraswati Thakur gave a farewell speech called “My Message” (Amar Katha), in which he praised these three disciples, bidding them bon voyage before they left to carry out the European mission.

The first news of results of their preaching in London was received at the beginning of May: a centre had been opened at 39 Drain Gardens, Kensington, S.W. 10. On May 31, Saraswati Thakur answered inquiries on spiritual matters sent from London by the Marquess of Ludian and Lord Zetland, a former governor of Bengal. On June 15, Lord Zetland presided over a meeting of the Society for the Study of Religion at Bedford Square, in which Saraswati



Thakur's disciples spoke on the glories of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu.

On June 23, at the London Gaudiya Math, a meeting was held in honor of Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur at which many distinguished guests, including the Honorable Justice Bistrow, heard about Bhaktivinoda's teachings. In the month of July, Saraswati Thakur received letters from several distinguished British citizens thanking him for the great work the Gaudiya Math had undertaken in Great Britain. They included Lord Irwin's private secretary, Mr. R. A. Butler, the Marquis of Ludian, Sir Stanley Jackson, and Times editor, Mr. Brown.

On July 5, former Viceroy of India Lord Irwin, his wife and representatives of the Joint Select Parliamentary Committee heard from the Gaudiya Math missionaries about their objectives in preaching Mahaprabhu's message in Europe. At 4 P.M. on July 20, the Secretary of State for India, Sir Samuel Hoare, introduced the Gaudiya Math preachers to Emperor George V and Empress Mary. They had the opportunity to offer him their respects and to tell him the purpose of the Gaudiya Mission. On July 14, they met with the head of the Church of England, the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Most Reverend Cosmo Gordon Lang. Then on October 7 and 8, a large meeting was held for the professors and students of Oxford University, in which the Gaudiya Vaishnava doctrine of the Holy Names was explained.

The Gaudiya Math's European preachers gave lectures on Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's gospel at the Eastbourne Theosophical Society on November 24-25, then at the Deutsch Akademi in Munich, Germany, on December 10; at Humboldt House in Berlin on December 12; Koningsburg on the 14th, at the Institut de Glielerson indien in Paris. On December 20, the London Gaudiya Math moved to 3 Gloucester House, Cornwall Gardens, S.W. 7.

### **Preaching activity in Bombay, Krishnanagara, etc.**

While this was going on, Saraswati Thakur opened the Sri-Krishna Kirtan Hall in Madras. From there he went to Bombay, where he met with the Nepali professor, Sanjiva Kumara Chaudhuri, M.A., and answered his three sincere questions.

Not long afterward, he opened the Gaudiya Math's Bombay office in the Jangu Villa on Babul Nath Road. While staying there, he made great efforts to preach Mahaprabhu's message in the large city. On May 20, in response to a question by a distinguished relative of Dadabhai Naoroji, he gave his resolution of the problem of the movement for the admission of untouchables into Hindu temples.

Meanwhile, on June 16, Saraswati Thakur spoke on the uniqueness of the Srimad Bhagavatam at the Krishnanagara Town Hall. The occasion was a memorial meeting in honor of Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur which was presided over by Kṣitipati Natha Mitra and Dinanatha Sannyal Ray Bahadur.

On July 3, Saraswati Thakur installed deities of Gaurasundara and Radha-Govinda in the newly finished temple at the Tridāṇḍi Gaudiya Math in Bhuvanesvara. This was followed by a kirtan festival.

In August, on the occasion of a solar eclipse, a spiritual diorama exhibition was held for the second time at Kurukṣetra. During the time of the Bagh Bazar Math's annual festival, a large kirtan procession was taken through many Calcutta neighborhoods. On August 12, Saraswati Thakur spoke on "The ultimate goal of human life", on the 20th, on "The uniqueness of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu", and on the 27th, in English on "The Vedanta, its morphology and ontology". On September 7, he went by motor launch to Nabadwip, bringing sankirtan to various places along the Ganges.

On October 27, Saraswati Thakur made his auspicious entrance into the city of Patna to preach Mahaprabhu's message to the local populace. Some of the distinguished people who came to hear his instructions were Amarendranath Das, Ray Bahadur; Ganesh Chandra Chand, the government archeological superintendent for the region of Bihar, Orissa, and Chota Nagpur; the barrister, P. R. Das; advocate Nabadwip Chandra Das; District and Session Judge, Shibpriya Chatterjee, etc. On November 14, Darbhanga Maharaj, Sir Kameshwar Singh Bahadur, K.C.S.I., opened the diorama exhibition in Patna which attracted some of the most distinguished citizens of that town.

On November 19, the third annual memorial meeting for Jagabandhu Bhaktiranjana was presided over at the Gaudiya Math by Sir Vijaya Prasad Singh Ray. At the end of November, the Bhakti-sandarbha, edited by Saraswati Thakur, was published in its entirety. On November 24, he spoke Harikatha in

Tetiya Palli near Nrisingha Palli in Nabadwip Dhama. On November 26 and 27, he took part in a sankirtan festival at the Ekayana Math in Krishnanagara. By his grace, there was also preaching activity in Amarshigram in Midnapore at this time also.

During this time, preaching activity was also being conducted in Karachi, now in Pakistan. On December 24, the spiritual exhibition was opened in Benares in the Michir Pokra neighborhood by Saravati Thakur's supporter, District Magistrate and Collector, Mr. Pannalal, I.C.S. [Indian Civil Service].

### **The Maharaj of Tripura visits the Gaudiya Math**

On January 15, 1934, the King of the independent state of Tripura, Viravikrama Kisora Devavarma Manikya Bahadur, visited the Calcutta Gaudiya Math with his entourage. He showed his reverence for the Acharya and at a great assembly that evening, gave a speech praising the work of the Gaudiya Math. On February 2, Kumara Bahadur Radhika Ranjana Chakravarti, B.A., his private secretary and retinue came to visit Saraswati Thakur and to receive his instructions.

On February 4, on his 60th birthday, the Vyasa Puja ceremony was held and printing of a book written by his disciples in glorification of his life, Saraswati Jayasri, was begun. On the same day in London, a meeting in honor of the Acharya was held at Grosvenor House in London's Park Lane, presided over by Lord Zetland.

On February 25, in Modadrumadvipa, the new temple at Vrindavan Das Thakur's birthplace was inaugurated. That year, the Nabadwip Dhama parikrama and festival celebrating the appearance of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu were held as usual, temple buildings at the site of Srivasa Angan and Gaura Kisora Das Babaji's samadhi were consecrated, three devotees were initiated into the Tridandi Sannyasa order, and Saraswati Thakur gave regular lectures in the Bhakti-vijaya Bhavana as well as at the annual meeting of the Nabadwip Dhama Pracariṇi Sabha. Amongst the notable visitors to the Chaitanya Math during this time were Rajarṣi Kumara Saradindu Narayan Ray and Ray Bahadur Ramaprasada Canda, who came on February 19, and visited many of the holy

places in Mayapur besides coming to see the Acharya.

On March 5, Saraswati Thakur headed a large preaching party which went to Cṃacuri Puruliya in Jessore, the home village of the Gaudiya Math temple manager, Maha Mahopadesaka Acharyatrika Kunjavihari Vidyabhuṣaṇa Mahasaya. He spent five days there constantly preaching the message of Lord Chaitanya.

### **The new temple at the Mayapur Yoga Pith**

On March 18, the foundations were laid for the proposed temple at the birth place of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, as well as for a smaller temple at Murari Gupta's house. Three months later, at 10 A.M. on June 13, the four-armed form of Vishnu known as Adhokṣaja, which was worshiped by Jagannath Mishra in his home, was found in the ground while digging the foundations for the new temple at the Yoga Pith, made possible by the donations of Sakhicaraṇa Ray Bhakti-vijaya.

### **The Gaudiya Mission Society in London**

On April 2, Saraswati Thakur established a shrine to Mahaprabhu's lotus feet in Chatrabhoga. The villagers there awarded him special recognition and he gave a speech in response. On April 8, he gave sannyas to several disciples. On the 20th he went to Puri from Calcutta.

On April 24, in Westminster's Caxton Hall, a general meeting presided over by Lord Zetland was held to inaugurate the foundation of the Gaudiya Mission Society.

On May 6, the archeologist Ramaprasada Canda Ray Bahadur gave a lecture on "Nabadwip at the time of Lord Chaitanya" at a meeting presided over

by Jatindranath Basu, M.L.C.

## **In Puri**

Throughout the month of May, Saraswati Thakur met with a number of important people and spoke to them about Krishna. They included the chief lecturer of the Ayurveda department at the Puri Sanskrit College, Ananda Mahapatra; the novelist Sachisacandra Caṭṭopadhyaya; the abbot of Emara Math, Gadadhara Ramanuja Das; Hanuman Khuntiya; Ray Bahadura Gaura Syama Mahanti; Radha Syama Mahanti; Professor Junakar of Dhaka University; Puri Deputy Magistrate Revatinatha Caṭṭopadhyaya and Magistrate Narendranatha Datta Ray Bahadur; the founder of the Bodhana Asrama, Girija Prasanna Mukhopadhyaya; Khagendranatha Mitra Ray Bahadur, professor at Calcutta University.

On June 27, the deity of Gopinath was consecrated by Saraswati Thakur at the Alalanath Brahma Gaudiya Math along with festive kirtan. The revised and expanded edition of the book Brahmana o Vaishnava was released on this day.

On July 12, he installed a deity of Gaura Kisora Das Babaji in Mayapur. On August 13, he preached to the son of the illustrious O. N. Mukherjee, Yamininatha Mukhopadhyaya. On the 14th, he installed deities at the Patna Gaudiya Math.

At the annual Gaudiya Math festival, once again Harinama Saṅkirtan was held in the streets of Calcutta.

On September 1, on the day of Krishna Janmaṣṭami, the book Saraswati Jayasri was released. On September 4, the English language fortnightly Harmonist was published in a new format.

On September 16, Saraswati Thakur spoke at the Gaudiya Math on Radhaṣṭami in an assembly presided over by Dvarakanatha Mitra, M.A., D.L. Countless visitors to the temple heard Saraswati Thakur speak on Krishna-conscious topics.

## **The month of Karttik in Mathura**

Starting October 17, Saraswati Thakur spent the month of Karttik, observing the vrata in Mathura with a large group of disciples and followers. During this time, he set the example of talking about the Aṣṭakaliya-lila of Radha and Krishna. On October 29, he discovered the place in Mathura city, in the Sataghara neighborhood, where Rupa Goswami would come for darshan of Gopal.

In the third week of October, his representative preachers visited several German universities to preach the message of pure devotion.

On November 1, Saraswati Thakur and his party visited Candrasarovara, Parasauli, Gauri Tirtha, and Paiṭhagram, and he was inspired to talk on the lilas which took place in these spots. On November 17, he gave his brahmachari disciple Tridaṇḍa-sannyas.

On November 29, at the Rajendra Bhavan in New Delhi, he spoke on “The duty of human life” and “Mahaprabhu’s mercy and his teaching” to an audience which included N. Chatterjee and Dr. J. K. Sen.

## **Chaitanya Sikṣamṛta is translated into Telugu**

On December 6, Raja Bhupendra Narayan Singh Bahadur presided over the fourth annual memorial assembly in honor of Jagabandhu Bhakti-ranjana. At this time, on his order, Saraswati Thakur’s Andhra disciple, Y. Jagannathn, B.A., published Bhaktivinoda’s Sri Chaitanya Sikṣamṛta in the Telugu language. Meanwhile, the English edition of Jaiva Dharma was also in publication.

## **The Governor of Bengal visits Mayapur**

On January 15, 1935, the Governor of Bengal, Sir John Anderson, came to visit the birthplace of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu in Mayapur and, after hearing about the site from Saraswati Thakur, himself gave a speech.

Saraswati Thakur's 61st birthday was celebrated with Vyasa Puja on February 23 in his birthplace, Puri, amidst the sand dunes near the ocean. A huge assembly was held at which the Maharaj of Puri, Gajapati Ramachandra Deva Bahadur presided. The following day, Saraswati Thakur led a parikrama around Puri and gave a lecture for the occasion. In preparation for the Dol Purṇima festivities, Sakhicaraṇa Ray Bhakti-vijaya had electric lights installed in the Yoga Pith temple building. On March 4, Sir. B. L. Mitra came to hear Saraswati Thakur speak on Chaitanya Mahaprabhu.

On March 20, Dol Purṇima, the birthdate of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu was marked by the inauguration of the newly finished temple. The Maharaj of Tripura, Sir Viravikrama Kisora Devavarma Manikya Bahadur, came to Mayapur for the occasion and officially opened the temple doors.

### **Preaching tourney in East Bengal**

On March 24, the Gaudiya Math Acharya went with a party of devotees to Deruli in Khulna district where he addressed several massive gatherings. On March 31, the Maharaj of Burdwan, Sir Vijaya Cṃad Mahatab came to the Calcutta Gaudiya Math and heard the Acharya speak.

On April 8, he came to Dhaka and placed the foundation for the proposed new temple building of the Madhva Gaudiya Math in Narinda Palli. The residents of Dhaka and Narain Ganj welcomed him and eulogized him.

On April 12, Saraswati Thakur installed deities at the Jagannath Gaudiya Math in Mymensingh. He stayed there until the 15th at "Sasi Lodge" on the invitation of Maharaj Sasikanta Acharya and was able to preach to many learned and distinguished citizens of the district.

## **Founding the Gaya Gaudiya Math**

On April 19, Saraswati Thakur travelled to Gaya where he visited all the places that Mahaprabhu had been to and constantly spoke to many educated and respectable people. On the 22nd, he established the Gaya Gaudiya Math. On April 30, he sent a few preachers to East Bengal and Burma. On May 31, he was in Darjeeling with a group of devotees, and spoke constantly on topics related to Krishna. Then on June 9 and 10, in large assemblies presided over by Sir Jadunath Sarkar and Colonel Upendranath Mukhopadhyaya, he had his leading disciples speak. On June 9, he spread Chaitanya's gospel on the Indian Broadcasting Service's radio network.

On June 28, at the Calcutta Gaudiya Math, he received Cooch Bihar Maharani Indira Devi, the princesses Ila Devi and Gayatri Devi, Prince Indrajitendra Narayan Bahadur, and the French intellectual Maximilian Poitiers, PhD, all of whom heard from the Acharya about Vaishnava philosophy.

On July 8, he installed deities at the Bombay Gaudiya Math on Proctor Street and in a meeting held at the People's Jinnah Hall spoke on the Bhagavat and Pancaratra. At this time, Saraswati Thakur's disciple Sambidananda Das, M.A., Bhakti-sastri, Pratna-tattva-visarada, received his doctorate from the University of London in Vaishnava history and literature. From the end of July to the middle of August, the Acharya was preaching in different places in the Nabadwip area.

## **Preaching the gospel of Lord Chaitanya on the radio**

Every Sunday beginning with the annual Gaudiya Math festival, street sankirtan was held and programs about Janmaṣṭami, Nandotsava, Radhaṣṭami and Bhaktivinoda Thakur's appearance day were given on the radio. Then, from Balaram's appearance day, the Acharya spoke on the Bhagavat for sixteen



consecutive days. During the festival itself, at the great assembly presided over by Cossim Bazaar Maharaj, Sachindra Nandi Bahadur, he spoke on “Devotion and worldly indifference”.

In Calcutta on September 18, the people of Calcutta welcomed and gave a special letter of appreciation to returning preacher Bhakti-hṛdaya Vana (Bon) Maharaj and two German devotees, who arrived from London.

On September 21, the full moon day of the month of Bhadra, On April 2, Saraswati Thakur gave a lecture inspired by the completion of the Gaudiya Math publication of the entire twelve volumes of the Bhagavat.

### **Niyama-seva in Radha Kuṇḍ**

From October 1 to 7, Saraswati Thakur was on a preaching engagement in New Delhi. Then, from the 8th, he spent more than a month in Radha Kuṇḍ to keep the vows for the month of Karttik (niyama-seva). During this time, he spoke daily on the Upaniṣads, Chaitanya Charitamrita, Srimad Bhagavatam, as well as walking around the Kuṇḍ, and hearing and chanting about Krishna’s Aṣṭakaliya-lila. A committee was founded to improve opportunities to serve the holy dham of Vraja named the Vraja-dham Pracariṇi Sabha.

On November 4, Saraswati Thakur installed deities at the Kunja-vihari Math at Radha Kuṇḍ, and two days later, Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur’s puṣpa-samadhi memorial and bhava-seva at Vrajananda-sukhada Kunja.

On November 7, he travelled to Seṣasayi in the Punjab and then on to Delhi where he preached at the annual festival on the 10th. On the 11th, he was in Gaya where he stayed, telling the good news of Mahaprabhu’s mercy to the people of that town until the 15th. On the 13th, he installed deities in the Gaya Gaudiya Math. During this period, the preaching activity in Burma was meeting with great success.

On Dec. 23, the Maharaj of Tripura, Viravikrama Kisora Devavarma Manikya Bahadur, presided over the fifth annual memorial festival to

Jagabandhu Bhaktiranjana. After the assembly, the Acharya met with Dr. Henry Hand and Mr. S. V. Rossetto of California, barrister S. N. Rudra, retired judge Lalita Mohan Basu, etc., preaching to them about knowledge beyond the senses.

### **Diorama exhibit at Prayag**

On December 27, Saraswati Thakur travelled to Patna where he spoke at the Gaudiya Math. On the 30th, he went on to Allahabad where he spoke on Mahaprabhu's teachings to Rupa Goswami.

On January 7, 1936, he opened the transcendental diorama exhibition at Prayag, after which he gave the presidential speech in English before an assembly of learned persons.

### **A devotional library and society for promoting daiva-varṇasrama**

On January 11, Saraswati Thakur returned to Mayapur, where he remained for a full two months, preaching daily to the devotees living at the Chaitanya Math and the birthsite of Gauranga Mahaprabhu.

On February 12, in celebration of his 62nd birthday, he established the Bhaktivinoda Thakur Research Institute or the Kṛṣṇanusilanagara ("Library for Krishna Culture"), and the Daiva-varṇasrama Saṅgha. The Vyasa Puja was held at Srivasa Angan. The appearance day of the Acharya was also celebrated in London with the London Gaudiya Mission Society chairman, The Right Honorable Sir Sadilal, presiding.

Starting from February 25, Saraswati Thakur started establishing deities of the viṣaya and asraya-vigrahas of each of Nabadwip's nine islands. On March 1, he went to Suvarṇa Bihar where he established the Suvarṇa-vihari Math where he installed deities. On March 5, he opened the Sarvabhauma Gaudiya Math in

Vidyanagara, also installing deities there. On the 7th, the Rudradvipa Gaudiya Math was opened along with deity service.

On March 8, the appearance day of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, on the Acharya's direction, the Burmese education minister, Dr. Bame, opened the Rangoon office of the Gaudiya Math at 29 Brooking St. At the London Gaudiya Math also, the devotees gave speeches in honor of Mahaprabhu's appearance, with Dr. Paṇhi presiding.

On March 15, the Acharya travelled to Assam where deities were installed at the Sarabhoga Gaudiya Math. The residents of Sarabhoga gave him a warm welcome and bestowed honors on him.

### **The hundred-day kirtan festival in Orissa**

On March 27, Saraswati Thakur travelled to Cuttack where he preached to distinguished people of that town. From March 29, he stayed at Caṭaka Parvata in Puri, establishing a residence for devotees and a temple with deities of Radha and Govinda. In a speech before many learned people of the city, he inaugurated a hundred-day sankirtan festival. On May 4, he celebrated Nrisingha-caturdasi at Alalanath, at the Brahma Gaudiya Math. On May 30, he initiated several brahmachari preachers into the order of Tridaṇḍi Sannyasis.

### **Baliyaṭi, Godruma, Darjeeling and Bogra**

On June 7, Saraswati Thakur went to Dhaka where he stayed at the home of Supati Ranjan Nag M.A., B.L., where he spoke on Krishna consciousness to an audience of distinguished persons. He also initiated a number of truth-seekers in the service of Lord Sri Krishna Chaitanya.

On June 9, he arrived in Baliyaṭi village in Dhaka district, accepted the

welcome of the villagers and gave a speech in thanks. On June 10, he installed deities of Radha-Govinda in the newly constructed Gadai Gauranga Math temple. On the 13th and 14th, he had his sannyasi preachers and one of his German disciples speak at Dhaka University and the Dhaka Bar Library.

On June 19th, he returned to Mayapur, and celebrated the 22nd anniversary of Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur's disappearance at Svananda-sukhada Kunja in Godrumadvipa. He spoke on renouncing the company of non-devotees and held a sankirtan festival. On the same day, the Gaudiya Math devotees gave the opportunity to thousands of pilgrims who had assembled at Kurukṣetra for the solar eclipse to hear Mahaprabhu's gospel by visiting the diorama exhibition, Sat Sikṣa Pradarsini.

On the 27th, Saraswati Thakur went to Darjeeling where he stayed at the Gaudiya Math office. He spoke and had his disciples speak to their distinguished guests on Harikatha. He installed Radha-Govinda deities there on July 19, taking the opportunity to speak himself to the assembled guests.

On July 24, he came to Bagura (Bogra) on the insistent invitation of its people. He was given a warm welcome and at the local Hindu Sabha meeting he spoke on the need for preaching Gaudiya Vaiṣṇavism in northern Bengal, which had previously been blessed by Narottama Das Thakur.

## **The Purushottam Vrata in Vrindavan**

After celebrating the appearance day of Balaram and Janmaṣṭami in Calcutta, Saraswati Thakur decided to spend the month of Purushottam (the supplementary month irregularly added to the Hindu calendar to balance the lunar and solar years, also known as Mala-masa) in the Mathura area. He left Calcutta on August 12. He first stayed in Mathura Cantonment at "Sivalaya". From there, he went to Vrindavan where he stayed at Madhumaṅgala Kunja, giving daily Bhagavatam classes. He inaugurated a place of worship in Govardhana. He returned to the Calcutta Gaudiya Math on September 9 for the annual festival.

## **The Gaudiya Saṅgh president sent to Great Britain**

On October 16, Saraswati Thakur spoke for nearly an entire hour to Dr. Shivapada Bhattacharya, M.B. On the 23rd, he gave a speech in the Sarasvata Sravaṇa Sadana in which he bestowed the responsibility for preaching Mahāprabhu's message in Great Britain and America on Bhaktisaraṅga Prabhu. He blessed him and gave him instructions in the worship of Gomati, Salagrama and Govardhana Silas.

## **Intimations of Saraswati Thakur's departure**

On October 24, he left for Puri. On November 1, Saraswati Thakur's dear disciple Tridaṇḍi Svami Bhakti-srirupa Puri Maharaj's life on this earth came to an end.

While at Puri's Caṭaka Parvata, he celebrated the appearance of Madhvacharya, Govardhana Puja, which he worshiped with the hymns composed by Rupa and Raghunath Goswamis. He also celebrated the disappearance day of his guru, Gaura Kisora Das Babaji. Each day, his disciples and guests were refreshed after bathing in the Ganges torrents of his preaching. While in Puri, he constantly warned everyone, "Worship the Lord without duplicity, for not much time is left." He constantly repeated two prayers written by Rupa and Raghunath:

pratyasaṁ me tvam kuru govardhana purṇam

O Govardhana, fulfill every one of my wishes! (Rupa Goswami's first Govardhanaṣṭakam)

nija-nikaṭa-nivasam dehi govardhana tvam |

O Govardhana, please give me residence somewhere near to you. (Raghunath Das's Govardhana-vasa-prarthana-dasakam)

Srila Prabhupada returned to Calcutta on December 9, preaching to his disciples without cessation during the entire voyage.

### **Srila Prabhupada's final instructions**

On December 27, several days prior to the setting of the blazing sun of the Gaudiya Vaishnava sampradaya, Om Vishnupada Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur, he spoke to an gathering of his closest disciples, at which time he said the following words:

“I have disturbed many people because I felt myself obliged to speak the unadulterated truth. I have told everyone to worship Hari without hypocrisy and because of this some people have perhaps considered me to be their enemy. So I have caused many people anxiety by telling them to give up other desires and hypocrisy and to sincerely serve Krishna. Some day they will be able to understand what I was getting at.

“All of you please preach the message of Rupa and Raghunath with great enthusiasm. The ultimate object of our desires is to become specks of dust at the lotus feet of the followers of Rupa Goswami. Remain united in following the asraya-vigraha in order to satisfy the transcendental senses of the one, non-dual supreme truth. Make your way through this impermanent, transitory life in whatever way you can, keeping the goal of worshiping the Lord foremost in your minds. Don't abandon this goal, even in the face of hundreds of dangers, insults, or persecutions. Don't lose your spirit if you see that the majority of people cannot accept the principle of selfless service to the Supreme Lord. Never abandon your bhajana, hearing and chanting Krishna-katha, the be-all and end-all of your devotional life. Please always chant the name of the Lord, being

humbler than a blade of grass and more tolerant than the tree.

“This body is like the aging cow which in ancient times was meant to be offered up in sacrifice. Only we desire to offer the body to Krishna in the sacrifice of the Holy Name established by Sri Krishna Chaitanya and his associates. We do not seek to become heroes performing great works or religious deeds; our true being and our identity is that of a speck of dust at the lotus feet of Sri Rupa Prabhu, life after life. The stream which flows from Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur will never be dammed up. Remember this and vow to double your efforts to fulfill Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur’s desires. Amongst you are many capable and worthy individuals. We seek nothing for ourselves; our only motto is:

adadas trṇam dantair idam yace punaḥ punaḥ |

srimad rupa-padamboja-dhulḥ syam janma-janmani ||

Taking grass between my teeth, I pray repeatedly that I may become a speck of dust at Sri Rupa Goswami’s lotus feet, birth after birth. (Raghunath Das Goswami, Muktarita.)

“While living in the world, we encounter many difficulties; but there is no need for us to be bewildered by these difficulties -- nor need we make any effort to remove them. What is necessary is for us, while we are still here, is to learn what will remain after we have removed all those difficulties -- what will be the nature of our eternal life. There are so many things which we want or don’t want, but we have to come to terms with this duality of attractions and repulsions. The more we distance ourselves from Krishna’s lotus feet, the more these things will draw us in. We can only begin to comprehend the exquisite taste of service to Krishna’s lotus feet after transcending these worldly attractions and repulsions and being attracted by his holy name. The doctrines of Krishna-bhakti seem startling at first, perhaps even perplexing. Knowingly or unknowingly, every human being is struggling to eliminate the adventitious elements in life which interfere with his direct experience of eternal fulfillment. Our only obligation is to go beyond duality and to enter the world of that eternal fulfillment.

“We have no attachment for anyone in this world, nor any hostility.

Whatever arrangements we make in this world last but a moment, while the need to search out the supreme fulfillment is equally unavoidable for everyone. May all of you work united and in harmony toward the same goal: to earn the right to serve the root asraya-vigraha. May the current of ideas propagated by Rupa Goswami flow throughout the world. May we never under any circumstances become indifferent to the seven-tongued sacrificial flame of the Holy Name. If our attraction to it remains ever-increasing, we will achieve all perfection. Remain faithful to Rupa Goswami's followers and preach Rupa and Raghunath's teachings enthusiastically and fearlessly."

## **The last day**

In the morning of the day on which he disappeared, Srila Prabhupada asked Tridaṇḍi Svami Bhakti-rakṣaka Sridhara Maharaj to sing Narottama Das's song, sri rupa manjari pada, etc. (See vol 2, chapter 18) and Navina Krishna Vidyalaṅkara to sing the song tuḥṃu daya sagara tarayite praṇi from Bhaktivinoda Thakur's translation of the Sikṣaṣṭaka. Prabhupada expressed satisfaction and thanks to Bhakti-sudhakara Prabhu (Nishikanta Sannyal) for his service. He also told Patna's Vrajesvariprasada Prabhu to remain enthusiastic in his service.

At about four o'clock in the afternoon, he called Sakhicaraṇa Raya Bhaktivijaya to tell him that he was very fortunate because of the service he had rendered to Sri Mayapur. Later in the afternoon, he said to Bharati Maharaj, "You are a competent person. Take care of the mission. It is best if love and rupture are seen as having the same meaning. Narottama Das Thakur adopted Rupa and Raghunath's understanding. It is best if we live according to that understanding."

Then Srila Prabhupada said to everyone, "I give my blessings to all who are present here and to those who are absent. Remember always that our only duty and religion is to propagate the service of the Bhagavat and of Bhagavan."



## **Entering the eternal abode**

At about 5:30 A.M., on Thursday, January 1, 1937, a Kṛṣṇa Caturthi, Srila Prabhupada entered the eternal abode, joining Radha and Krishna in the predawn pastimes (nisanta-lila) of their eternal 24-hour cycle of activities in Vraja. At the end of every night, Radha and Krishna lie intertwined in embrace, becoming as one body. It is at this moment, when their united form of Gaurasundara is eternally manifest, that Varṣabhanavidayita Das, their servant, joined them.

namaste gauravaṇi-sri-murtaye dina-tariṇe |

rupanuga-viruddhapa-siddhanta-dhvanta-hariṇe ||

Obeisances to you who are the incarnation of Gauranga Mahaprabhu's gospel, the deliverer of the fallen and the destroyer of the darkness of unorthodox doctrines which oppose the conclusions given by Rupa Goswami and his followers.

## **The announcement of Prabhupada's departure published in Gaudiya magazine**

Last Narayan 4, 450 of the Chaitanya era, at the end of the Thursday night, Paush 16, 1343 of the Bengali calendar, on Friday morning, January 1, 1937, the great acharya of the Gaudiya Vaishnava sampradaya and its only protector, the ninth in descent from Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, the best of the followers of Svarupa Damodar and Sri Rupa Goswamis, Paramahansa Parivrajakacharya Om Vishnupada Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Prabhupada, joined the eternal activities of Radha Govinda in the first hour of their eternal twenty-four cycle of activities. This is the same hour that his own guru, Om Vishnupada

Gaura Kisora Das Babaji entered into the nitya-lila.

The meaning of entering the lila at this hour is understood clearly by those who are intimate with him for it is directly experienced in their hearts, but a hint can be given here. At the end of the night, Radha and Krishna are locked in an unbreakable embrace, gaḍhaliṅgana-nirbhedaṁ aptau. Jayadeva Goswami has indicated this situation with the word naktam in the first verse of Gita-govindam which begins meghair meduram ambaram. When Radha and Krishna are joined together like this, they take on their combined form of Gaurasundara. It is this auspicious moment that Varṣabhanavi-dayita Das chose to make his entry into their pastimes.

Srila Prabhupada is like the sun of the Gaudiya sampradaya, as he is identical with its acharyas Rupa and Svarupa Damodar. But now that this sun of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's sampradaya has set, darkness has descended not only on the preachers of the Gaudiya Math, but on the entire world. It seems that the direct light of guileless devotion will once again be hidden from the view of the world's people. Our only hope is that this luminary amongst spiritual teachers sufficiently inspired his followers with such a desire to serve the feet of the Lord, with such ever-fresh enthusiasm, and instilled in them such ideals of practice and preaching, that the stream which passed through Svarupa and Rupa and then through Bhaktivinoda Thakur will continue to gather force and flow into the world. In our hearts, we consider nothing else to be possible even in our worst imaginings. From the blessings that he gave just before passing on, we know that by adhering faithfully to his teachings and propagating them, we will be able to get his direct, personal association and will be able to find all the strength we need. Furthermore, by preaching fearlessly, with an independent spirit, and with the force of character that comes of sincere service and fidelity, we will be able to preach the gospel of Gaurasundara, our master's master, throughout the world. By so doing, we are assured that his blessings will continue to rain down on us even more profusely. This faith is the sole lampost illuminating the path of pure devotion, which is strewn with countless obstacles.

We, the Gaudiya's writers, are today without shelter, as we will no longer be able to show our articles to him who was the preserver of Rupa and Raghunath's tradition. Srila Prabhupada would eagerly read every article which was to be published in the Gaudiya. He would give us blessings and show the deepest satisfaction with our efforts. Now, even though he will no longer be able to do this directly, we will not be entirely devoid of his blessings nor of the

spiritual strength arising from his mercy. We are not without succor, for he left us the gift of service to those who know the doctrines of pure devotion as taught by Bhaktivinoda Thakur, and through this service we shall gain the capacity to understand his most confidential desires and doctrines.

### **Prabhupada's eulogy of Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur**

Srila Prabhupada wrote the following words in Sajjana-toṣaṇi after the disappearance of Om Vishnupada Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur:

“The purpose of the Sajjana-toṣaṇi remains unchanged. Thakur Mahasaya has entered the nitya-lila, but by his blessings this magazine will continue to bring joy to the pious through Harikatha, just as before.... Some think, accepting the opinion of the material sensualists, that the cause of bhakti is advanced by eliminating the idea of pure devotion; others tarnish pure devotion's beauty by accepting the facile path of the materialistic devotees as the standard.

“Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur has sung in his Kalyaṇa-kalpa-taru,

bhakti-badha jaha ha'te    se vidyara mastakete

padaghata kara akaitava

sarasvati kṛṣṇa-priya    kṛṣṇa-bhakti tṃjar hiya

vinodera sei se vaibhava

Fearlessly kick in the head any learning which causes obstacles on the path of

devotion. The goddess Saraswati is dear to Krishna, and devotion to Krishna is in her heart. Bhaktivinoda considers the learning she inspires to be his treasure.

“The goddess of learning manifest in the teachings of Bhaktivinoda Thakur and Gauranga Mahaprabhu can neither condone any words which contradict devotional service, nor any which compromise with it. This, we have repeatedly recognized, is the extraordinary characteristic of those teachings. Bhaktivinoda Thakur considers this goddess of learning which is most dear to Krishna, Mahaprabhu’s teachings, to be his treasure. In other words, Bhaktivinoda’s words reach as far as the lotus feet of the original asraya-vigraha, Srimati Radharani. Bhaktivinoda himself, non-different from Vṛṣabhanu-nandini, has expanded into Mahaprabhu’s gospel. Service to the Gauranga who takes pleasure in delivering his message is identical with the service to Radha and Govinda in obedience to the guru, service to the gopis and to their lord and master through following Rupa Manjari.

“Illuminated by the lamp of devotion, we can see the path which leads to the bower where the Gauranga of Bhaktivinoda’s teachings sports. It reveals those words of Gauranga, the everlasting order of his goddess of learning which enters into the ears of eternally conditioned souls like ourselves: ‘Be the servant of Svarupa and Rupa’s followers and always chant the Holy Name.’

We pray to remain constantly dedicated to the glorification of that abode of virtue, Gauranga, who is Krishna himself residing in that message-bower, with single-minded commitment and great gusto. On this day, we pray to all the Vaishnavas who are obedient to the preceptors in the line of Svarupa and Rupa for this blessing.”

**Srila Bhakti-dayita Madhava Goswami Maharaja**

nama om viṣṇupadaya rupanuga-priyaya ca |

srimate bhakti-dayita-madhava-gosvami-namine ||

kṛṣṇabhinna-prakasa-sri-murtaye dina-tariṇe |  
kṣama-guṇavataraya gurave prabhava namaḥ ||  
satirtha-priti-saddharma-guru-priti-pradarsine |  
isodyana-prabhavasya prakasakaya te namaḥ ||  
sri-kṣetre prabhupadasya sthanoddhara-sukirtaye |  
sarasvata-gaṇananda-saṁvardhanaya te namaḥ ||  
sri-bhakti-dayitaṁ namacarya-varyaṁ jagad-gurum |  
vande sri-madhavaṁ deva-gosvami-pravaraṁ prabhum ||

Obeisances to Srila Bhakti-dayita Madhava Goswami Maharaj, the representative of Lord Vishnu and is dear to the followers of Rupa Goswami.

Obeisances to you, Lord and guru, who are the personification of the quality of forgiveness, who [as guru] are the manifestation of Krishna meant to deliver the most fallen.

Obeisances to you, whose religious principle is to act on your affection for your guru and your godbrothers, for which you revealed the spiritual power of the Lord's Garden (Ishodyan) in Mayapur.

Obeisances to you, who increased the joy of those devoted to Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur by recovering his birthplace in Puri, for which you are justly renowned.

I worship my lord, Srila Bhakti-dayita Madhava Goswami Maharaj, teacher of the Holy Name and spiritual master to the universe.

**Madhava Maharaj's appearance**

Tenth in line from Sri Chaitanya, Paramahansa Parivrajakacarya Om 108 Sri Srimad Bhakti-dayita Madhava Goswami Maharaj Vishnupada, one of the dearest associates of Prabhupada 108 Sri Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur, the founder of the Chaitanya Math and the Gaudiya Maths throughout the world, was himself the founder of the Chaitanya Gaudiya Math throughout India and my own spiritual master. He appeared in this world at 8:00 A.M. on Friday, Agrahayan 3, 1311 (Bengali), or November 18, 1904, Utthana-ekadasi, in the village of Kancana-para in the Madaripur subdivision of Faridpur district in East Bengal.

Utthana-ekadasi is the tithi which marks the end of the Caturmasya period, when Vishnu wakes up from his four-month long sleep. It thus brings joy and auspiciousness to the world. Similarly, the appearance on that tithi of the most compassionate dear associate of Lord Hari, our most worshipable Srila Bhakti-dayita Madhava Goswami Maharaj, had the effect of bringing joy and good fortune to the world's conditioned souls who are suffering from the three-fold miseries. It is also significant that our parames̥ṭhi guru, the incarnation of extreme renunciation, Paramahansa Vaishnava Srila Gaura Kisora Das Babaji, entered the eternal pastimes on this same tithi.

### **Gurudeva's birthplace and family**

Kancanapara village is in a pure and beautiful area on the banks of the Padma near its mouths in the precinct of Bhedara Ganj. The Padma River is sometimes called the Kirtinasa River, "the river which destroyed one's glories", because its annual flooding washes away so many villages and towns. Further upstream, however, there is a place called Prema Tali where Nityananda Prabhu once bathed, depositing divine love of God for Narottama Das Thakur.

The village was prosperous and home to a large number of Brahmins. It was also the residence of my gurudeva's maternal uncles, who were of a prominent wealthy family in the area. Though they were talukdars or subsidiary landholders, they were given respect equal to that of zamindars. The British

rulers of the day decorated them with the title “Raja-cakravarti”; thus, though the family name was Bandyopadhyaya, their home came to be known as the Chakravarti-baṛi. The village is known to his disciples as “Gurudeva’s Matulalaya”.

The following is known about Srila Gurudeva’s paternal family. His grandfather was named Caṇḍiprasada Devasarma Bandyopadhyaya, his father Nisikanta. They lived in the village of Bharakara in the precinct of Ṭaṅgibaṛi in the Vikramapura subdivision of Dhaka district. Both Srila Gurudeva’s father and grandfather were well known in the district as righteous men. Srila Gurudeva’s mother, Saibalini Devi, was an extremely devoted woman who dedicated herself to the service of God, the Brahmins and holy men.

Srila Gurudeva lost his father at the age of four, after which his mother took him and returned to her brothers’ home which is where he was raised. His uncles’ great affection for him played an important part in his upbringing. The name given him by his father was Sri Heramba Kumara Bandyopadhyaya, but he was known by his nickname Ganesa.

### **Guru Maharaj’s childhood**

From a very early age, Srila Gurudeva began to display extraordinary qualities. He would never under any circumstances tell a lie. He would explain to his friends and companions the moral value of truth and the unsoundness of telling falsehoods. Everyone was impressed by the young lad’s behavior.

Even when very young, Srila Gurudeva showed little interest in materialistic enjoyments. He distinguished himself from the other children in his desire to lead an orderly and disciplined life. Not only did he himself act in this way, but he encouraged the other children to do the same. He always tried to alleviate the sufferings of others and bring them happiness, even if it meant undergoing difficulty himself. People who observed the extent of his generosity and wisdom were convinced that he would grow up to be a great personality of extraordinary character.

I personally heard from Srila Gurudeva's mother that whenever she gave him some special delicacy or sweet, he would only eat whatever was left after he had called his friends and distributed it amongst them.

At school, his teachers were astonished to hear him say things which showed a level of wisdom beyond his years. The following story can serve as an example: One day, he and some of his fellow students were playing as is wont for boys of that age. They were engaged in various competitions of speed and strength including a running race. Srila Gurudeva ran quickly and took the lead, but tripped on a root and fell with great force, causing him to bleed profusely. When his schoolteachers and other guardians heard, they rushed to the scene and applied medicines to his cuts and bruises. They also said many things to calm him, but he answered, "You need not worry on my account. I will quickly get better. The Lord does everything for our good. I could have injured my eyes, ears or broken my nose, but nothing serious like that happened. In my previous lives I committed so many sins that I should no doubt have suffered a more serious accident, but God is so merciful that he did not allow it to happen." When the school teachers heard him say these things, they immediately realized that he was no ordinary child.

While in high school, Srila Gurudeva started a library for the benefit of his poorer classmates and lent books to them without cost. Throughout his youth, Srila Gurudeva was a natural leader as a result of his tall, handsome figure, his charismatic personality, his extraordinary honesty and patience. He never had to apply, or stand for election to leadership positions; wherever he chose to participate, others would unfailingly be impressed by his qualities and acclaim him as their leader. What is more, they were satisfied with his performance afterwards. In truth, leadership is the result of an individual's depth of character, exemplary behavior and competence. Tall and strong, Srila Gurudeva also excelled in sports and was regularly made captain of his teams. He also participated in dramatic presentations. There was no area in which he did not excel and thus he was always involved in directing the affairs of any group in which he participated. He even played a role in the independence movement.

## **Beginnings of a spiritual calling**



Srila Gurudeva was exemplary in his devotion to his mother. She would read to him and have him read various scriptures so that he became conversant with religious issues and imbued with faith in God. She made him read the Bhagavad-gita daily, so that by the age of eleven, Srila Gurudeva had memorized the entire 700 verses of the text.

He finished his primary and secondary education in Kancanapara and Bhatagrama. Then for higher education he went to Calcutta. While in Calcutta he began to feel great separation from the Supreme Lord. He stayed with a relative named Narayan Candra Mukhopadhyaya who later took sannyas from him and was given the name Bodhayana Maharaj. Narayan Candra recounted that he often saw Srila Gurudeva calling out the names of the Lord and crying in the middle of the night. He would eat only haviṣyanna (an unspiced khichuri) once a day. In this state of absorption in the Lord, he one day had a dream in which Narada Muni came and reassured him. Narada gave him a mantra and told him that by chanting it he would achieve all perfection. However, upon awakening, try as he might Srila Gurudeva was unable to recall the mantra he had been given in its entirety. The loss of the mantra bewildered and distressed him immeasurably. His irritation with life in the household reached an intolerable degree and he became determined to abandon it. With this idea in mind, he went to ask the blessings of his widowed mother who at that time was living in Gosani Durgapura in Nadia district. She made no effort to oppose his wishes. So, with an intense desire to have a vision of the Supreme Lord, Srila Gurudeva set off for the Himalayas. Just as iron filings attracted by a magnetic force cannot be thwarted, the individual soul who has been attracted to the Supreme Soul allows nothing of this world, whether friends or family, to interfere with his calling.

### **Srila Gurudeva's visit to Haridvara**

Srila Gurudeva's passionate desire for the Lord brought him first to Haridvara and from there into the mountains. High up in the Himalayan jungle, he fasted for three days from food and water, all the time anxiously calling out to the Lord. When he had practically lost all awareness of the external world, he was given a divine order to seek out a spiritual master. He was also told that his guru would appear to him in the very place he had left.

Taking the divine order as his imperative, he came down from the mountain to the banks of the Ganges in the holy town of Haridvara where he decided to stay for a few days. While there, he met a saintly person to whom he recounted all that had happened on the mountain. When he asked this sadhu for advice, he was told to return home and that he would meet a bonafide spiritual master there.

Srila Gurudeva made up his mind that he would return to Calcutta after spending a few more days in the pilgrimage town. But his stay in Haridvara was disturbed when a rich businessman and his wife from North India came there on pilgrimage. The couple, which was childless, saw the handsome figure of Srila Gurudeva when bathing in Brahma Kund, and was attracted to him. They gave him a gift of fruit and sweets and insisted that he visit them in their lodgings. Out of courtesy, Srila Gurudeva finally acceded to their request.

At their place of residence, they once again fed him copiously and generally treated him with great affection. Finally, they proposed that he become their adopted son, which meant that he would eventually inherit their substantial wealth. Srila Gurudeva was unprepared for such an offer and began to think, “I came here with the intention of abandoning family life. Now Maya has devised another way to ensnare me.”

Srila Gurudeva politely refused their proposal and left their home, but the businessman and his wife were so enamored of him that they came each day and repeatedly put pressure on him to accept their offer. One who has a sincere eagerness to attain to the Supreme Lord, however, cannot be swayed by any amount of material temptation. Someone filled with desires for sense enjoyment would have found it impossible to resist such an opportunity to become heir to a fortune, but Srila Gurudeva had no such yearnings. Because of his sincere aspiration to worship the Lord, he considered the couple’s invitation to be dangerous and rejected it out of hand. He consequently found it impossible to remain in Haridvara and returned to Calcutta without any further delay. These events took place sometime around 1925.

## **Srila Gurudeva meets Srila Prabhupada**

In the same year, Srila Gurudeva came to visit Mayapur for the first time with his childhood friend Narayan Candra Mukhopadhyaya and some other people. There they saw Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur and were attracted by his superhuman personality. Srila Prabhupada said during a lecture they attended that it was alright to visit the deity form in the temple, but that one had to learn to see it first. One cannot really see it with eyes that are blinded by material desire, but only with the eyes of love. On the same day, Dr. S. N. Ghosh and his wife were initiated by Srila Prabhupada.

After returning to Calcutta, Srila Gurudeva started visiting the Gaudiya Math on Ultadanga Road to hear Srila Prabhupada speak Harikatha. Understanding that through service to the Vaishnavas one could clear the road to the Lord and receive his mercy, or perhaps wishing to teach that same principle to the world, Srila Gurudeva sent much money and material for the Math without any fanfare. During this period, he also spent much time in studying the scriptures.

After hearing the Vaishnava doctrines from Srila Prabhupada, he became convinced of their reasonableness and superiority over other religious dogmas. He took shelter of Srila Prabhupada and on September 4, 1927, on Radhaṣṭami, received initiation in the Holy Name and mantra at the Ultadanga Math. After initiation he was known as Hayagriva Das Brahmachari. Acharya Das Devasarma was the officiating priest at the Vaishnava fire sacrifice.

## **Life and service in the Gaudiya Math**

Not long after being initiated, Srila Gurudeva decided to commit himself completely to the service of Krishna and his devotees by moving into the Math. He thus took the great vow of remaining a lifelong celibate or naiṣṭhika-brahmacari. It was not long before Srila Gurudeva was counted amongst Srila Prabhupada's leading disciples as a result of his dedicated service to his guru, his unflagging enthusiasm and his competence in a variety of services. Srila Prabhupada used the words "volcanic energy" to describe Srila Gurudeva's unflinching resolve to accomplish the tasks given him, his application and his success in all endeavors.

Srila Gurudeva was one of the leading collectors whose service was essential for maintaining Srila Prabhupada's vast movement and particularly the efforts made toward preaching Mahaprabhu's message in the West. Anyone who saw Srila Gurudeva's golden form and heard him speak on Krishna conscious subjects could not fail to be attracted. Many people came forth spontaneously and made donations to him.

On Srila Prabhupada's order, Srila Gurudeva spent a long time at the Madras Gaudiya Math, where he was chiefly responsible for the purchase of land, the construction of the temple, naṭa-mandira and residences. During this time he was particularly encouraged by his senior Godbrothers, H. H. Bhakti-rakṣaka Sridhara Maharaj and H. H. Bhakti-hṛdaya Vana (Bon) Maharaj. In the course of collecting funds for this project, Srila Gurudeva met with the leading citizens of Madras and became closely acquainted with many of them.

### **Srila Prabhupada's advance man**

In order to awaken consciousness of the Lord in ordinary folk, Srila Prabhupada travelled to Calcutta, Dhaka, Patna, Allahabad, Benares and other important places throughout India. He organized preaching festivals as well as parikramas of Vraja and Nabadwip Dhamas, established preaching centres and Maths, spreading the message of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu in various cities, putting on programs and sending out street sankirtan parties. He also established shrines of Mahaprabhu's feet (pada-piṭhas) in many of the places that the Lord had visited, restored other holy sites, published transcendental books, magazines and newspapers in a variety of languages in order to spread the message of pure devotion. In all these preaching programs, Srila Gurudeva was one of the leading participants.

Srila Prabhupada generally sent Srila Gurudeva as the advance man to do the groundwork for these events. He had complete faith that whatever task he gave him would be carried out to completion. Srila Gurudeva was one of the principle devotees charged with purchasing land in Andhra Pradesh, near Goṣpada Tirtha in Rajahmundry district, and the construction of the Ramananda Gaudiya Math in memory of Mahaprabhu's intimate associate Ramananda Raya,

whose meeting with Lord Chaitanya took place there. No matter how important a personality, whenever anyone met Srila Gurudeva with his handsome features and imposing physique, his pleasant manner, his extraordinary personality, his facility with modern reasoning and his ability to convince by means of irrefutable scriptural evidence, he would become enchanted and be quite happy to do anything requested of him. Srila Gurudeva's entire being--his meditation, his consciousness, his japa, everything--was fully devoted to fulfilling Srila Prabhupada's desires. The volunteer workers of today could not even imagine the extent of his commitment to service, through which he gave up eating and sleeping, working through the night if necessary to achieve his goals. Srila Gurudeva's single-minded, sincere allegiance to his spiritual master is an example to be followed by everyone. He never undertook any task without the express direction of his spiritual master. As a result of his full surrender to Srila Prabhupada's lotus feet, he came to inherit his divine potency for spreading Lord Chaitanya's mission in its entirety.

### **Srila Prabhupada's visit to Assam**

We can know the degree to which Srila Prabhupada trusted Srila Gurudeva and considered him to be a responsible servant and intimate associate from comments he made in March of 1936, on the occasion of the installation of Sri-Sri-Guru-Gauranga-Gandharvika-Giridhara deities at the Sarbhog (Assam) Gaudiya Math.

One of the 64 mathas and preaching centres that was established during Srila Prabhupada's lifetime was the Sarbhog Gaudiya Math in Assam's Kamrup district, near Barpeta. Srila Prabhupada sent Srila Gurudeva along with his senior Godbrother, H. H. Bhakti-rakṣaka Sridhara Maharaj, Janaki-vallabha Das Brahmachari and others to make preparations for the installation of Deities in the Math. At that time, the Math was under the direction of Srila Gurudeva's senior Godbrother, H. H. Tridaṇḍi Svami Bhakti-vijnana Asrama Maharaj. When Srila Gurudeva's party arrived in Sarbhog only a few days before the festival date, they were shocked to find that little or nothing had been done in preparation for Srila Prabhupada's coming and the installation of the Deities. Srila Gurudeva's personality was such never stopped working until his desired goals were

achieved, nor did he ever lose his enthusiasm. He immediately brought all his efforts to bear on arranging for temporary quarters for Srila Prabhupada and the other devotees who would be coming with him.

When Srila Prabhupada arrived at the Sarbhog rail station at 6:30 AM on Sunday, March 15, 1936, he was greeted by a large party of devotees and local citizens. Noteworthy amongst those who accompanied him were Kunjavihari Vidyabhuṣaṇa Prabhu, Paramananda Vidyaratna Prabhu, Vasudeva Prabhu, Kirtanananda Brahmachari, Sajjana Maharaj, Krishnakesava Brahmachari, etc. On each of the three days that Srila Prabhupada remained in Sarbhog, thousands of men, women and children were satisfied with varieties of mahaprasada.

On the following day, Srila Prabhupada ordered Tridaṇḍi Svami Bhaktirakṣaka Sridhara Maharaj to make final arrangements for Sri-Sri-Guru-Gauranga-Gandharvika-Giridhara's installation rituals over which he was to officiate. As a part of these arrangements, Sridhara Maharaj dressed the deities and decorated them with flower garlands, etc. At the auspicious moment at 10 o'clock in the morning, upon being told that everything was ready, Srila Prabhupada entered the temple room, took darshan of the garlanded deities and paid his prostrated obeisances to them. On seeing that they were already decorated, he said, "The deities have already been installed." On hearing this, Sridhara Maharaj immediately became remorseful, thinking that he had committed an offense by doing something which Srila Prabhupada himself had intended to do. Despite his faux pas, the installation of the deities was performed in great splendour according to the regulations of the Vaishnava-smṛtis and in the midst of joyous sankirtan.

At the end of the installation ceremony, Asrama Maharaj repeatedly asked Srila Gurudeva to tell Srila Prabhupada that Nimananda Brahmachari had not carried out his duties. Srila Gurudeva was reluctant to anything which would be displeasing to Srila Prabhupada, and so at first refused. Upon being pressed, however, he felt obliged to do as he was asked out of respect for his senior godbrother.

Later that day, while Srila Prabhupada was out walking, Srila Gurudeva followed behind him fanning to keep the flies away. As they were talking, he told Prabhupada of Asrama Maharaj's complaint. As soon as Srila Prabhupada heard it, he became angry and chastised Srila Gurudeva who felt extremely sorry at having displeased him. Srila Prabhupada, however, seeing the effect his words

had on Srila Gurudeva, immediately changed his mood and began to praise him affectionately. Srila Gurudeva was not happy at hearing these praises, however, because he thought that Srila Prabhupada was afraid that he was not be able to take criticism. But Srila Prabhupada began to give him many valuable personal instructions which showed the extent to which he held his disciple dear.

Srila Prabhupada first said, “Why do you want so much? And why do you let it bother you that much? It is not proper to expect so much service from such-and-such a person. Your service to your spiritual master and all its details are your responsibility alone. You should be grateful if anyone else contributes to it in any way. Krishna’s ‘majordomo’ is Srimati Radhika. She knows that she alone is entirely responsible for Krishna’s pleasure. If anyone comes forward to help her, she is filled with gratitude.”

Here, it is apparent that Srila Prabhupada was saying that it was up to Srila Gurudeva to take full responsibility for his service in its entirety. If anyone should assist him in the fulfilment of that responsibility, he should be grateful. From this statement it is clear that Srila Prabhupada considered him to be a confidential associate. Because of the similarity of Srila Gurudeva’s physical appearance to that of the tall, light-skinned Srila Prabhupada, people often mistook him to be his son.

Srila Gurudeva often recounted the story of the Sarbhog Gaudiya Math when he wished to give an example of the process of surrender to his disciples. We have already stated that His Grace Sridhara Maharaj felt as though he had committed an offense for having garlanded the deities in the place of Srila Prabhupada. Sridhara Maharaj asked Srila Gurudeva to approach Srila Prabhupada and ask him for forgiveness on his behalf, that he made the mistake unintentionally. Having been so entreated by Sridhara Maharaj, Srila Gurudeva wrote a letter to Srila Prabhupada in which he prayed for forgiveness on Sridhara Maharaj’s behalf. Prabhupada answered that a surrendered soul never commits offenses. The Lord never sees the faults of one who is surrendered to him, always forgiving him, for the surrendered person has given up everything for the service of the Lord without any ulterior motive. On the other hand, someone who has ulterior motives and is not surrendered must fear offenses at every moment.

## **Srila Gurudeva does not go West**

Srila Prabhupada was eager to preach Mahaprabhu's message in the western world and had decided to send Srila Gurudeva, as he was competent for the mission. Srila Gurudeva and two others had their photos taken and passports made in preparation for the trip. When everything was ready, Rajarṣi Saradindu Narayan Ray said to Srila Prabhupada, "England is a land full of heavenly nymphs. I don't think it is a good idea to send handsome young men there to preach. You should rather send a more aged disciple." Srila Prabhupada thought that the suggestion of Rajarṣi Saradindu Narayan was not without foundation and decided to send H. H. Bhakti-pradipa Tirtha Maharaj in Srila Gurudeva's place. He instructed Srila Gurudeva to collect money for the preaching mission.

Srila Gurudeva was afraid that Srila Prabhupada would not remain in the world much longer and had been worried that if sent to England he may never see him again. He was thus relieved when on the advice of the Rajarṣi Srila Prabhupada changed his mind about sending him there.

## **Meeting with Pancanana Tarkaratna**

Srila Prabhupada recognized that Srila Gurudeva possessed a great talent for persuading others by defeating their arguments in a humble and respectful manner. As a result, on October 4, 1936, he decided to send him to Bengal's leading scholar, Pancanana Tarkaratna of Bhattapara in Naihati. Pancanana Tarkaratna was very proud of his Brahminhood and his scholarship and had forcefully criticized the daiva-varṇasrama system preached by Srila Prabhupada. Srila Prabhupada was afraid that his criticisms could cause untold harm to countless people seeking the ultimate good and thus gave the responsibility of meeting him to Srila Gurudeva. Pancanana Tarkaratna was reluctant to give proper respect to anyone who was not born in the Brahmin caste. For this reason, Srila Prabhupada told Gurudeva give his previous identity as a high-caste Brahmin and to go without tilaka or Vaishnava dress.



On the given day, at 8:30 in the morning, Srila Gurudeva came to Pancanana Tarkaratna's house accompanied by Praphulla Candra Caṭṭopadhyaya of Naihaṭi's Kaṇṭhalapaṛa. He first met with the paṇḍita's highly qualified son, Sri Jiva Nyayatirtha, and then spent two hours in scriptural discussions with him. Srila Gurudeva often recounted the experience that he had to his disciples: "It is true that Pancanana Tarkaratna possessed vast learning. He had memorized large numbers of verses from scripture, but in some cases was not able to come to logical conclusions or to resolve contradictions. In his arguments he would come to a 'blind lane' and would not be able to give a proper answer when questioned."

When asked how such a great scholar could end up this way, Srila Gurudeva would answer, "Pandit Mahasaya had never had the opportunity to associate with a pure devotee or a real saintly person. Only by following a pure devotee or through associating with saintly persons can one arrive at the right conclusions."

Srila Gurudeva's long conversation with Pancanana Tarkaratna resulted in an article which headlined the Gaudiya, the Math's Bengali weekly, 15.13-15 (1936).

### **Srila Gurudeva meets Dr. C. V. Raman**

The following events took place in 1930 while Srila Prabhupada was still present. A month-long festival was being held at the Calcutta Bagh Bazar Gaudiya Math for Janmaṣṭami. Each day a different dignitary was invited to sit as honorary chairman of the evening meeting. Some students of world-renowned scientist C. V. Raman were amongst those who came regularly to listen to the lectures of the Gaudiya Math preachers. One day, these students came to see Srila Prabhupada and complained that every day a different distinguished person was being made honorary chairman, but their professor, whose fame had spread throughout the world, had not even been invited.

Srila Prabhupada answered that he had no objection to having Dr. Raman be honorary chairman one evening. He asked Srila Gurudeva to take charge of

inviting him. Srila Gurudeva first went to Dr. Raman's house but did not find him there. His wife sent him with an orderly to Dr. Raman's laboratory on Circular Road. There, Srila Gurudeva met with the scientist on the second floor where he was sitting in a corner of a huge loft, engaged in his research activity. Dr. Raman spoke neither Bengali nor Hindi and so their conversation took place in English.

Upon being asked by Dr. Raman the reason for his coming, Srila Gurudeva answered, "A large month-long religious gathering is being held by the Bagh Bazar Gaudiya Math at Janmaṣṭami. On each day, a different dignitary of the city is invited to grace the chairman's seat, and we humbly invite you to do the same."

Dr. Raman answered, "I do not believe in your Keṣṭo-Biṣṭu. I have no faith in anything that cannot be confirmed by direct sensory experience. I cannot waste my valuable time with imaginary things. I would prefer to attend any conference dealing with science or education."

Srila Gurudeva said, "Your own students have been coming regularly to listen to the Math's swamijis speak. It was their desire that you be honored in the same way that so many other Calcutta community leaders have been. I have been asked by my gurudeva to invite you, so please accept our invitation."

Dr. Raman then challenged Srila Gurudeva: "Can you show me your God? If you can show him to me, I will go."

One side of the lab room in which the conversation was being held was a windowless, doorless wall, on the other side of which lay the whole of north Calcutta. Srila Gurudeva asked, "I can see nothing on the other side of this wall, but if I say that there is nothing there, will that be true?"

Dr. Raman answered, "Perhaps you cannot see what is there, but I will be able to through the use of the appropriate instruments."

Srila Gurudeva then asked him, "There is a limit to what your instruments can do. You can only see as far as they allow you. Can you say that there is nothing beyond these limits?"

Dr. Raman replied, "Never mind. I will not waste my time on this. I will not give my attention to anything which is not within my sense experience. I will

only spare my valuable time if you can actually show me your God. Can you do it?”

Srila Gurudeva: “If your students were to say to you that they will study your scientific findings only if you can show them the truth of what you have realized through your experiments, what would you say?”

Dr. Raman: “I would make them realize it!”

Srila Gurudeva: “Can you make them realized before teaching them?”

Dr. Raman: “No, I would first have to show them the process by which I have come to realize the truth. They will have to follow that process if they want to have the same realization. First they have to earn their Bsc. degree, then their Msc. Then they will have to study with me for another five years. Then I will be able to make them understand.”

Srila Gurudeva: “If that is what you say, then can the seers of ancient India not say exactly the same thing? Follow their process and see whether you experience God’s existence or not. You are not able to show the scientific truths which you profess to your students until they have adopted your process. Similarly, if you want to experience or understand God, you have to follow the process by which that is accomplished. If it does not happen, then you can deny its value. But how can you deny its value without having experimented?”

Dr. Raman could not answer. After a few moments of silence, he said, “I know nothing about Krishna. If I go, I will be able to say nothing. You would be better off inviting someone who knows something about these matters.”

Srila Gurudeva’s quick-wittedness and presence of mind was such that it was impossible to get away with an illogical statement in his presence. Such capacity does not come with simple book-learning. Only one who has surrendered himself to his spiritual master and has come to direct realization of the truth through his mercy can display such divine power through the influence of his spiritual master. To such a person, a display of intelligence without any basis in realization cannot get very far.

**After the disappearance of Srila Prabhupada**

Srila Prabhupada instructed all of his disciples to follow him in preaching the message of Sri Rupa and Raghunath Goswamis, and that they should work together to achieve this one purpose. From the superficial point of view of a short-sighted pessimist, the events which followed Srila Prabhupada's disappearance appear to go against his orders. But whatever comes about as a result of the all-auspicious Lord Hari's desire is for the good of everyone. If we are unable to see the truth of this basic tenet of spiritual life we become incapable of recognizing the order which exists in creation and become unhappy as a result. Nothing takes place contrary to the will of the Lord; one who believes that he is all-auspicious must also accept that whatever takes place is somehow working toward the fulfilment of some larger, auspicious purpose. The short-sighted are only able to realize this after much water has flowed under the bridge.

Mahaprabhu said, "My name will be preached in every town and village throughout the world." In order to bring this prophecy to fruition, it was his will and that of his prakasa-murti, Srila Prabhupada, who is non-different from him, that those leading disciples who had been enriched by their blessings should be inspired to work to that end independently. Srila Prabhupada did not wish that those worthy disciples of his who had attained the qualifications to act as acharya should be restricted or limited in their activities. As a result of their being empowered by him to spread Mahaprabhu's message, the movement has today been acknowledged and adopted by many persons throughout the world, fulfilling the Lord's prediction. If they were ordinary flawed living beings who disregarded the wishes of their spiritual master, then such widespread successes would not have been possible. When those hapless people who are ignorant of the overall intention of the Supreme Lord praise one of Srila Prabhupada's disciples and condemn another, they fall from the path of spiritual life and into the muck of Vaishnava aparadha.

All of Srila Prabhupada's associates tried or are trying to sincerely follow his orders to the extent of their abilities. As a result of these sincere efforts, great numbers of wretched souls have been attracted to the teachings of Lord Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and have accepted the discipline of Vaishnava sadacara. They have been engaged in the worship of Lord Krishna according to the doctrines of pure devotional service and have thus made their lives successful.

## Opening the Shyamananda Gaudiya Math

In 1942, just prior to taking the vows of tridaṇḍi sannyas, Srila Gurudeva worked together with his godbrothers, particularly H. H. Tridaṇḍi Svami Bhaktikumuda Santa Maharaj and H. H. Tridaṇḍi Svami Bhakti-vicara Yayabara Maharaj, to establish a maṭh in the city of Midnapore. This maṭh was named the Shyamananda Gaudiya Math in honor of Shyamananda Prabhu who first preached Mahaprabhu's message in this area. As a result of the preaching efforts of these godbrothers, many men and women of the city became attracted to Mahaprabhu's message, took up the regulative principles of Vaishnava sadacara and the path of devotional service as ordained by Sri Chaitanya. The Gaudiya Math's good name spread throughout the region and many wealthy citizens of Midnapore city took up the task of establishing a permanent branch there. With their help, land and a large two-storey building were purchased in the Shiva Bazar area for the Math.

Srila Gurudeva told the story of how one of the chief donors, Govardhana Piṛi Mahasaya, came into contact with the Math and the amazing change in his life as he renounced all sinful activity to engage in the service of Krishna and the devotees. When Srila Gurudeva was in search of donations for the establishment of the maṭh, he suggested going to visit Piṛi, but local people counselled him not to. They described him as a great miser who would not give a paisa to a poor person in need. They told Srila Gurudeva that if he went to see him, he was sure to be insulted.

Srila Gurudeva answered, "A sadhu shouldn't be bothered by the fear of insults, nor should he seek praise. If Govardhana Piṛi is a miser, then the sadhus should make an effort to see that he changes his ways. There is no need to change a good person. We can see the real results of preaching when bad people change and become good."

One day, Srila Gurudeva went to Govardhana Piṛi's office and was greeted cordially and given a suitable seat. When he heard from Srila Gurudeva that he was desirous of opening a preaching centre by which the ultimate good for the jivas could be done through the spreading of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's

teachings, Govardhana Babu responded by saying that his family had worshiped Radha and Krishna for generations and that they continued to serve the deities in his home. He invited Srila Gurudeva to come and see them and took him to his roof-top temple to take darshan of his deities. Srila Gurudeva was very pleased to see the beautiful Radha Krishna deities and said, “Radha and Krishna are the object of our worship. As yet we have no deities in our preaching centre. We would be very grateful if you gave us these deities for our temple.”

Govardhana Babu answered, “These are our family deities and they have a great deal of land in their name. It is impossible for us to part with them. However, if you want to have deities brought for your temple, I will pay the cost.”

Srila Gurudeva told him that the Gaudiya Math imported their images of Radha and Krishna from Jaipur, but Govardhana Babu was not deterred and continued to agree to bear all the expenses. When Srila Gurudeva returned to the ashram and told his companions about Govardhana Babu’s offer, they were all dumbfounded. Govardhana Babu paid not only for the deities, but for their service, their dress and ornaments, the installation ceremony and the feast which followed it. Thereafter, he began coming regularly to hear Harikatha in the temple. In time, as a result of the association of devotees, he came to realize that materialistic life was without substance and gave up all sinful practices. Understanding that true happiness could only be found in worshiping the Lord, he took initiation in the Holy Name and the mantra and adopted a regulated Vaishnava life.

When the local people saw the amazing change in Govardhana Babu’s behavior, they were astonished and overjoyed. One day his wife came to the math and in an outburst of emotion, fell at Srila Gurudeva’s feet and said, “After your coming, my husband has been returned to me. All our family problems have disappeared.”

We cannot say how many people’s lives were affected by coming into contact with Srila Gurudeva after having sweet dealings with him. This is only a single small example of how one person’s life was completely changed.

**Srila Gurudeva takes sannyas**

Immediately prior to taking sannyas, Srila Gurudeva went on a preaching tour of Bankura and Midnapore districts, visiting Kether Danga, Onda, Jhanti Pahari, Bankura city, and Gardevata, etc. People everywhere were impressed by his personality, his upstanding character and his powerful Harikatha, and became attracted to the gospel of Lord Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. Accompanying him on this trip were Krishnakesava Brahmachari, Râmagovinda Brahmachari, Kunjalal Prabhu, Harigovinda Prabhu and other godbrothers. Helping the preaching work in Kether Danga and Onda were Radha Govinda Siṭ and Avinasa Pal, respectively.

Although Srila Prabhupada had intended to give Srila Gurudeva tridaṇḍi-sannyasa, he never did so because of the important role he played in fundraising. Not long after Srila Prabhupada's disappearance, however, a large group of Gurudeva's godbrothers appealed to him to take the renounced order. Amongst them were Kunjavihari Vidyabhuṣaṇa Prabhu, H. H. Bhakti-prakasa Araṇya Maharaj, H. H. Bhakti-sarvasva Giri Maharaj, H. H. Bhakti-Svarupa Parvata Maharaj, H. H. Bhakti-prasuna Bodhayana Maharaj, Krishnakesava Brahmachari, Sundara-gopala Brahmachari. They convinced him that if he wished to give full commitment to the fulfillment of Srila Prabhupada's command to preach Mahaprabhu's message, it was incumbent on him to take sannyas. Thus, on the 457th anniversary of Mahaprabhu's appearance, on the Phalguni Purnîma of 1944, at the age of 40, he took sannyas on the grounds of the Ṭoṭa Gopinath temple from H. H. Bhakti-gaurava Vaikhanasa Maharaj according to the Vaishnava rituals. He was thenceforth known as Parivrajakacarya Tridaṇḍi-svami Srimad Bhakti-dayita Madhava Goswami Maharaj. Other important godbrothers present on that occasion were Kunjavihari Vidyabhuṣaṇa Prabhu, Paramananda Vidyâratna Prabhu, H. H. Parvata Maharaj, H. H. Bodhayana Maharaj, etc.

After taking sannyas, when Srila Gurudeva returned to the Shyamananda Gaudiya Math in Mednîpura on Vishnu 3, 458 Gaurabda, he was greeted with great pomp by the members of the Visva Vaishnava Rajasabha. The Visva Vaishnava Rajasabha presented him with a special certificate in which they praised him for his fearlessness, his saintly courage, his ability to enchant people when speaking on religious topics, and above all, his affection for the devotees by which he gave great joy to Srila Prabhupada.

Of all of Srila Gurudeva's virtues, his attachment to his spiritual master and his affection for his godbrothers were exemplary. After Srila Prabhupada's disappearance, whenever any of his godbrothers were faced with hardship, he would immediately step forward without considering his own happiness or distress in order to give them a helping hand. Many of Prabhupada's worthiest disciples were unable to come to terms with the turmoil in which the Math found itself after his disappearance and either returned to householder life or considered doing so. Srila Gurudeva took a lot of trouble to find them at their home and to persuade them to return to the Math and a life of service to the Lord. Some of those he brought back subsequently took the role of acharya. Devotees are the worldly manifestation of Krishna; affection for them accurately demonstrates the extent of one's affection for Krishna. Similarly, the guru's disciples are the manifestations of the guru himself and affectionate behavior to them demonstrates the depth of one's love for the guru. Srila Gurudeva's exemplary love for his godbrothers was evident to the very last days of his presence in this world.

### **Preaching activities in East Pakistan**

After Srila Gurudeva took sannyas, just prior to Indian independence (1947) and afterward, he went on an extended preaching tour throughout India and East Pakistan (modern Bangla Desh). Accompanying him were Mihir Prabhu, Sankarshan Prabhu, Krishnaktesava Brahmachari, Trailokya Prabhu, Mahendra Prabhu, Sri Brahma, Pyarimohana Brahmachari, Yajnesvara Das Babaji Maharaj, and others. Some of the important places he visited in Dhaka and Mymensingh districts were Baliyati, Nawabganj, Kalakopa village, Jamuki, Pakulla, and Churain.

While in Jamuki-Pakulla in Mymensingh district, Srila Gurudeva gave a lecture in a pandal set up at the local high school which he often talked about later. In the audience that gathered, more than a thousand people of both Hindu and Muslim faiths were present. Many students and teachers from the school were also there. Several local policemen gave Srila Gurudeva the friendly warning that following partition, the situation was tense in the new country of Pakistan. He should therefore be careful about what he said and did because the



government was watching him. If complaints were made that something he said went against Pakistan's interests, he could be jailed. After having received this warning and seeing the large numbers of police officers present in the crowd, Srila Gurudeva started to worry about the difficulties of being put in prison, where one would surely have to come into contact with many untouchable foodstuffs, etc. He thus wanted to avoid interruptions from the audience and so requested the listeners to save their questions for which he would leave fifteen to twenty minutes at the end of his discourse. He furthermore said he would entertain any inquiries on matters not related to his lecture at his quarters at another time. If anyone interrupted the lecture to ask questions it would disrupt the proceedings and cause distress to the other listeners.

Despite this request, however, after Srila Gurudeva had been speaking for half an hour, a mullah stood up and asked, "What is the reasoning behind the Hindu custom of worshiping idols (but-parasti)?" Many of the people in the audience were irritated by the interruption and told him to hush up and Srila Gurudeva not to answer. But Srila Gurudeva welcomed the mullah's question by praising it, saying that it was deserving of an answer from which everyone present could profit. Furthermore, by answering it he would not wander from the subject under discussion, but would rather enrich it.

He then proceeded to deal with the mullah's question as follows. He said that before answering him, he wished to ask him a question: "Do you believe in God (khuda)?" The mullah said, "Of course I do." Srila Gurudeva then asked, "Do you believe in Khuda's omnipotence?" The mullah loudly declared, "Khuda is all-powerful!" Srila Gurudeva then laughed and said, "There you have your answer."

Not realizing the implications of the word "omnipotent" were, the mullah was at first confused by Srila Gurudeva's answer. So Gurudeva started to clarify by asking, this time with the help of an example: "Is God powerful enough to take a Mymensingh elephant and to push him through the hole of the smallest needle without even harming a hair on his body?" When the mullah remained silent, Srila Gurudeva continued, "Maulvi Saheb does not know the extent of Khuda's powers, but the fact is that nothing is impossible for the omnipotent Lord. Kartum akartum anyatha kartum yah samarthaḥ sa eva isvaraḥ. He can do whatever he imagines, undo it or change whatever he has done. The Supreme Lord is all-powerful and nothing is beyond his abilities. The omnipotent Lord is not limited to the powers which we ascribe to him. That is not what is meant by

omnipotence. The sarva-saktiman is one who possesses all powers imaginable and unimaginable. Once we have accepted that the Supreme Lord is omnipotent, we cannot say, ‘He can do such and such, but not this or that.’ In accordance with his wishes, the supremely powerful Lord can appear in any form he desires, at any time, with his full complement of powers. If you say that he cannot, then there is no point in claiming that he is all-powerful.

“Any figure that a man may create out of the five elements, or any entity that he imagines with his material mind -- whether with form or formless -- is all material. That is what we call a putula or an idol. There is no regulation in the Sanatan Dharma for the worship of such idols. What is ordained, rather, is service to the Lord’s deity form or sri-vigraha. The sri-vigraha is that form which the all-powerful Supreme Lord feels obliged to accept as a result of his devotee’s love for him. There is a gulf of difference between an idol and the Lord’s deity form. Even though the Lord’s deity form is purely spiritual, cid-ananda-maya, a materially conditioned soul is unable to recognize him, just as he would be unable to recognize the Lord if he appeared incarnate directly before him. One can only perceive the Lord’s divine form with the eyes of pure devotion. A vision of the Lord which has not been earned is not a true vision of the Lord.”

## **Preaching in Assam**

After East Pakistan, Srila Gurudeva took his party into Assam, recalling that Srila Prabhupada had once directly ordered him to preach there, as the Assamese people are simple and have faith in sadhus. To fulfill that order, Srila Gurudeva first went to Sarbhog near Barpeta in Kamrup district. Accompanying him were Bhuvana Prabhu, Uddharan Prabhu, and Krishnakesava Brahmachari Prabhu.

Because of problems in the Gaudiya Math subsequent to the disappearance of Srila Prabhupada, Srila Gurudeva stayed at the house of Krishnakesava Brahmachari’s brother rather than in the Math. As there had been torrential rains and extensive flooding in the area, the devotees had to put all their bedding in an ox-cart and walk through knee-deep water to get to there. As the veranda and ground floor of the house were under water, the party had to construct a bamboo platform on which to sleep, while another such platform served as a toilet. Even

in these difficult circumstances, Krishnakesava Prabhu's devout mother daily cooked meals for the Vaishnavas.

The war with Japan was at its height during this period and the Japanese army had already conquered Burma and crossed the border into Assam. The British Indian government's War Ministry had ordered many homes throughout Assam to be requisitioned for quartering Indian army troops. Krishnakesava Brahmachari's family home was one of those taken over for this purpose and Srila Gurudeva and his party were obliged to stay in some village not far from Sarbhog. This is just a small example of how Srila Gurudeva was prepared to accept any difficulty to follow the orders of his own spiritual master and to bring auspiciousness to those who had forgotten Krishna.

Srila Gurudeva preached in these untoward circumstances for seven days before moving to Sarbhog where he stayed in Gopal Prabhu's house. While there, he gave daily Bhagavatam lectures at the house of a local high school teacher and leading citizen, Cintaharaṇa Paṭgiri. Those who became Srila Gurudeva's disciples during his preaching activities in Sarbhog were Gopal Dasadhikari and his wife, Shivananda Dasadhikari, Khagen Dasadhikari, and Achyutananda Dasadhikari.

A local youth named Kamala Kanta Goswami was a regular attendant at Srila Gurudeva's Bhagavat lectures. He was so attracted by Mahaprabhu's teachings that he decided to leave home and join his preaching party. Shivananda Prabhu and his nephew enthusiastically invited Srila Gurudeva to visit their village, Bhavanipura-Tapa, where he stayed for a few days. Kamala Kanta Goswami accompanied the Vaishnava group to Tapa, but when his father, Ghanakanta Goswami, found out, he came there, severely chastised him, and took him back home. Ghanakanta was conditioned to believe in the superiority of Brahmins. He did not accept the rationale behind the daiva-varṇasrama taught by the Gaudiya Math. He considered that his son had lost his caste status by eating the food of the devotees and he instructed him to remain outside the house until he had atoned. Kamala Kanta had been born in a very high caste, but after hearing the pure scriptural doctrines from Srila Gurudeva about the differences between a Vaishnava and a Brahmin, about the superiority of the Vaishnava and about how a Vaishnava can be born in any race or caste, he could not understand what fault there was in taking food which had been cooked and served by Vaishnavas who followed the religious practices prescribed in the scriptures. He could not approve of his father's attitude, which was disrespectful to the

Vaishnavas, and in order to avoid offenses, he left home again the very next day and came back to Tapa to surrender to Srila Gurudeva. Though Kamala Kanta wanted to take initiation, Srila Gurudeva worried that his father and family might cause trouble, and thought it better to not give him nama and mantra on that occasion.

In Tapa, several wealthy Marwari businessmen were attracted to Srila Gurudeva and took great care to serve the Vaishnavas and to help the preaching of Mahaprabhu's gospel. Shivananda Prabhu was very renounced, even though married. He gave his worthy son, Lokesa, to Srila Gurudeva to be fully engaged in the service of Guru and Gauranga. It is rare to see a father give his own son over to devotional service in this way. Shivananda Prabhu's nephew Sri Lohita and son Lokesa were initiated in the Holy Name at the house of Tularama Babu in Tapa. Just before leaving for Calcutta, Srila Gurudeva also initiated Kamala Kanta Goswami, Ramaprasada and Bhavananda in the Holy Name. He gave full initiation to Sri Lohita, Lokesa and Kamala Kanta when they arrived in the Midnapore math. They were given the names Lalita-caraṇa Brahmachari, Lokanatha Brahmachari and Krishna-prasada Brahmachari, respectively. All three of these devotees later took sannyas from Srila Gurudeva and were known thereafter as Tridaṇḍi Svami Srimad Bhakti-lalita Giri Maharaj, Tridaṇḍi Svami Srimad Bhakti-suhṛd Damodar Maharaj, and Tridaṇḍi Svami Srimad Bhakti-prasada Asrama Maharaj.

### **Bhagavata-paṭha at the Chief Minister's house**

Before returning to Calcutta, Srila Gurudeva spent a few days in the Assamese capital, Gauhati. Through the efforts of Krishnakesava Brahmachari and Cintaharaṇa Paṭgiri, he had the opportunity to meet many of Assam's leading citizens and preach to them. Amongst these people were Assam's chief minister, Gopinath Barḍalai, Durgesvara Sarma, Kumudesavara Goswami, Bhuvana Goswami, Kanakesvara Goswami, Rohiṇi Chaudhuri, Navina Barḍalai, Girija Das, Dhireṇa Deva, Caritra Babu, Narendra Babu, etc.

Arrangements were made for Srila Gurudeva to give Bhagavat discourses at the Chief Minister's house. The people who came there to hear him speak the

pure doctrines of the Bhagavat were enchanted. One day after Gurudeva's lecture, Gopinath Bardalai came to him with great enthusiasm and praised his explanation of siddhanta. He said, "Upon hearing your Bhagavata-paṭha, I am convinced that your objectives and those of Mahatma Gandhi are the same. You give so many examples from scripture and explain everything logically, and then you tell people to chant the names of Krishna. Gandhiji also ends his speeches, in which he has talks about so many different things, by engaging everyone in 'Ram-dhun'. So both of you have the same goal -- to make people chant the names of God. I don't see any difference between your messages. What do you think of this opinion?"

Srila Gurudeva recognized that Gopinath Bardalai had great faith and affection for him. He did not wish to disturb his mind by saying something which would hurt him, so he decided to instruct him according to his level of understanding. He said, "If you don't mind, then I will tell you what I think."

The Chief Minister said, "I have been illuminated by all your valuable instructions. I have never heard such a learned discourse on the Bhagavat from anyone else before. How could I mind if you say anything at all for my benefit. Speak freely and say whatever you wish to say."

Guru Maharaj then said, "Before I entered the Math, I used to take part in the freedom movement. Gandhi's Sabarmati Ashram used to publish an English newspaper called Young India which I often read. I remember once that Gandhiji told his audience in a speech that he was ready to abandon even the chanting of the Holy Name for the sake of his country. As far as I can remember, his exact words were, 'I can sacrifice Ram-dhun for my country.' We, on the other hand, say exactly the opposite: 'We can sacrifice our country for Ram-dhun.' Our worshipable Lord Rama is not there for us and our ends; everything is there for him. Western philosophers have defined the Absolute by saying, 'The Absolute is for itself and by itself.' We do not have an 'It-God'. Our Lord is the Supreme Person, the 'He-God'; so we prefer to say, 'The Absolute is for Himself and by Himself.' The unlimited universes come out of him, they exist within him, and they are maintained by him. So their existence is uniquely to fulfill his ends. If anyone wishes to worship the Lord, he must have a proper theological understanding."

Gopinath Bardalai was so influenced by Srila Gurudeva's powerful personality that he told him he wanted to abandon householder life and live in

the Math, dedicating his entire life to the service of the Lord. Unfortunately, his associates would not let him leave politics. Not long afterward he died and so was never able to do as he had wished. Politics are so entangling that once one has gotten involved in them, it is very difficult to extricate oneself.

As a result of the influence Srila Gurudeva had on all these important people in Gauhati, he became well-known both in the city and outside it. After completing his preaching activities there, he returned to Calcutta.

### **Bhakti-vallabha Tirtha Maharaj takes shelter**

In 1947, Srila Gurudeva returned to Assam, this time to Goalpara. He was invited by the Gaudiya Math householder, Radhamohana Dasadhikari. Accompanying him were Krishnakṣaya Brahmachari, Uddharan Brahmachari, Madhavananda Vrajavasi, and Ratharūḍha Das Brahmachari. Srila Gurudeva and his companions head-quartered in Radhamohana Das's house and held meetings in various parts of the town. The regular Harisabha in Goalpara held a special assembly at which the town's leading barrister, Kṣiroda Sena, was made president. Amongst the other important people who were present were the local district attorney, Kamakhya-carāṇa Sena and the pleader for the Mechpara estate, Priya Kumara Guha-Raya.

Kamakhya-carāṇa Guha-Raya, son of Dharendra Guha-Raya, first met Srila Gurudeva at Radhamohana's house in Goalpara. He later took initiation and became known as Krishna-vallabha Brahmachari, and after sannyas, Tridaṇḍi Svami Bhakti-vallabha Tirtha Maharaj. He came with his friend Devavrata (Rabi) to ask some questions about spiritual life, as he wished to establish clearly by what method he could attain the Lord. When he first saw him sitting on an elevated seat and paid his obeisances to him, Kamakhya-carāṇa felt Srila Gurudeva's blessings being showered on him, and his entire body erupted with horripilation. He asked him the following question: "When I chant the Holy Name, it seems as though I will see the Lord any minute. Then I will have to leave my home and family, giving up all the love I feel for them. This troubles me so much that I stop chanting. Please give me some advice so that I won't stop chanting when these thoughts start bothering me."

Even though the question did not show great intellectual depth, Srila Gurudeva praised it to give enthusiasm to the questioner. He then said, “A few geese used to live by a lake which was really nothing more than a stinking, stagnating little waterhole. They lived quite happily there, eating the plentiful snails, clams, worms and shrimp. One day, they saw a flock of their cousins, the swans, flying overhead. The large birds looked so beautiful with their sparkling white wings that the geese began to think that the place where they were heading must surely be much more wonderful than their waterhole. If they could only live there, surely they would become as beautiful as the swans and be as happy as they.

“The swans had been to the sea and were now on their way to Manasa Sarovara for the summer. One of them saw the geese looking at them so pitifully and felt compassion for them. He came down to land near geese who were astonished by the swan’s beauty. They asked him if he could take them with him to his home. The swan said that he had come precisely for that reason, to take them away from this putrid place. But when he told them to follow him, the poor geese pleaded that they were unable to fly very far. The swan felt so sorry for them that he told them to climb on his back and that he would carry them.

“The geese then started to wonder whether they would be able to find the snails, clams, worms and shrimp they were used to eating once they were at Manasa Sarovara. The swan answered that such disgusting things were not available there, and that the swans lived on lotus stems. The geese began to shriek as if with one voice, ‘Then how will we survive?’ And so they decided not to go at all.

“The geese’s attachments to other things kept them from going to live in a very beautiful place. Similarly, our attachment to this perishable body and everything connected with it is an impediment to our going to join the Lord. The Lord is all-auspicious and free from any material defects, he is the embodiment of ultimate joy, and so is his abode. There is no place there for the despicable aspects of transitory material life. Anyone who is unable to abandon his attachments to things unconnected to the Lord and wishes to hang on to those things are unable to attain him. The Lord and Maya are opposites. Supreme auspiciousness cannot be had unless one is freed from material wants through the association of advanced devotees.”

tato duḥsaṅgam utsrjya satsu sajjeta buddhiman |  
santa evasya chindanti mano-vyasaṅgam uktibhiḥ ||

An intelligent person should therefore avoid bad company and associate only with devotees. With their realized instructions, such saints can cut through the knots of material attachments. (SB 11.26.26)

Radhamohana Prabhu was Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Prabhupada's initiated disciple. He had stayed as a brahmachari in the Gaudiya Math for a while before entering householder life. People of the region held him in high esteem because of his knowledge of Vaishnava philosophy, his high standards and personal character. In Goalpara he was known as Ramamohana Da. He worked as a clerk in the office of Kamakhya-caraṇa's uncle, and so had the opportunity to shower him his affection and kindness by showing him the devotional path. He was thus the vartma-pradarsaka guru who brought Bhakti-vallabha Tirtha Maharaj to the Gaudiya Math. Because of his interest in the ultimate spiritual benefit of others, he had to face much opposition and criticism. Srila Gurudeva's letters for Kamakhya were sent to Radha-mohana's address. The affection of Radha-mohana's pious wife and family on Kamakhya could never be repaid.

In his letters, Srila Gurudeva advised Kamakhya to study Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur's Jaiva Dharma in order to eradicate all doubts. As a result of reading this book, Kamakhya-caraṇa indeed found that the doubts which he had harboured for so long were effaced. In another letter, Gurudeva said that if he planned to follow a life of contemplation, the nivṛtti-marga, and dedicate his life to the worship of the Lord, then it made no sense to take a government job. On the other hand, if he wished to follow the path of action, the pravṛtti-marga, and worship the Lord while staying at home, he should take the job. Kamakhya realized that it would not be possible for him to engage in pure devotional service in his family environment and so he made up his mind to leave.



## **Preaching activities in Hauli**

My parama-gurudeva, Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur, the founder of all the Gaudiya Maths, had visited Goalpara on one occasion. He ordered his householder disciple, Nimananda Prabhu, to establish a Gaudiya Math near the banks of the Brahmaputra River, in a beautiful spot on Hulukanda Hill. The Math was given the name Prapannasrama and was considered a branch of the Gaudiya Math. In the course of time, however, due to the unavailability of personnel and other problems, the institution was lost. Later, Goalpara resident Saratkumara Nath offered to give a building and land for the establishment of a Math in the town. Srila Gurudeva understood that this was Srila Prabhupada's desire and so he accepted the offer. He established a branch of the Chaitanya Gaudiya Math there in 1969.

Some of the places Srila Gurudeva visited while preaching in Assam were Bijani, Bhatipara, Hauli, and Barapeeta. In Hauli a great meeting was held where thousands of men and women, both of the Hindu and Muslim faiths were present. As usual, Srila Gurudeva asked the audience to save its questions for the end. Here again, however, a Muslim scholar (maulvi) interrupted to ask, "Has anyone ever seen the soul or God? What is the proof that you are not simply deceiving everyone when you talk about the soul and God?"

The audience asked Srila Gurudeva not to answer as the question had been asked in an irregular manner, but he thought that if he did not respond, the ignorant would think that it had was no answer. He saw that the maulvi was carrying a book, and he asked him what its name was. The maulvi called the book a kitab and gave its name. Though Srila Gurudeva knew several languages, including Bengali, Assamese, Hindi and English, and though his eyes were in perfect condition, he could not recognize the title of the book from where he was sitting. He asked the maulvi if he was not deceiving him by giving him some false name. How could he prove that it was not so?

The maulvi asked the people sitting around him to confirm that the title he had given was indeed correct. Srila Gurudeva said, perhaps the group was in collusion to deceive him. Maulvi Saheb was surprised by his statement and asked him what he saw. Srila Gurudeva said that it looked like a bunch of scribbles. Maulvi replied that he evidently did not know Urdu, and Srila

Gurudeva confessed that indeed he did not. The Maulvi then asked him, if he did not know Urdu how could he expect to know what was written there? He would first have to learn Urdu, then he would be able to confirm that he had been told the book's correct title.

Srila Gurudeva then took the maulvi's own words to explain to him what he was getting at. "Even if someone knows many languages, he won't be able to understand Urdu unless he has learned it. Even if one has good eyesight, unless he knows Urdu, he will neither be able to recognize what sounds are represented by its script, nor what the meaning of those sounds is. The same thing goes for understanding the soul and the Supersoul. Even if one has great learning and experience in this world, unless he has specifically earned the qualifications to experience the Lord, he will not be able to experience him. There are two kinds of vision, one based on knowledge (veda-dṛk), the other on simple sensual capabilities (māmsa-dṛk). The physical eye can only see physical objects and nothing else. Things which are beyond matter and the sense are self-revelatory and can only be seen with his blessings. The truth is revealed in the heart of the surrendered soul."

A few people took shelter of Srila Gurudeva in Hauli, and became fixed in Vaishnava practices and took the vow to worship the Lord according to the teachings of Lord Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. Most noteworthy amongst these was Ramesvara Varman, who was known after initiation as Ramesvara Dasadhikari.

## **Continued preaching in Assam**

Remembering Srila Prabhupada's instructions, Srila Gurudeva returned to Assam nearly every year with a force of disciples and godbrothers in all asramas. The immense efforts paid off as hundreds of men and women took to following the regulative principles and became his disciples.

In some places, extremely unfavorable circumstances presented themselves. Nevertheless, Srila Gurudeva remained undisturbed and continued to preach fearlessly. The great devotees who have completely surrendered to Krishna, go wherever they wish without any worry. Nothing can impede their

tendency to serve the Lord. Because their service has no basis in personal desire, it is unstoppable.

tatha na te madhava tavakaḥ kvacid

bhrasyanti margat tvayi baddha-sauhṛdaḥ |

tvayabhigupta vicaranti nirbhaya

vinayakanikapa-murdhasu prabho ||

O Madhava, O Lord, those who have given themselves to you, who are fixed in friendship with you, never fall from the path in that way. Protected by you, they fearlessly step over the heads of armies of opponents. (SB 10.2.33)

Srila Gurudeva wandered from village to village simply to bring the greatest good to every living being, to turn them toward Krishna. Despite the difficulties, he travelled, sometimes by foot and sometimes by oxcart, in order to deliver the Lord's message. Some of the places he visited were Goalpara, Dhubari, Basugmao, Bilasipara, Kashiketra, Sidali, Agiya, Depalcum, Bardamal, Lakshmipura, Krsnai, Dudhana+i, etc., in Goalpara district; Gauhati, Sarbhog, Cakcaka Bazar, Ketakibari, Hauli, Barapeta, Barapeta Road, Pathasala, Tihmu, Bijani, Rañgiya, Nalabari, Jalaha Ghat, Bhatipara, Unnikuri, Amin Gmao, etc., in Kamarupa and Barpeta districts; Tezpur, Tamla, Bindukuri, Rañgapara, Dhekuwajuli, Mañgaladai, etc., in Darrang district; Silchar and Hailakandi in Cachar district; Sibsagar, Lakhimpur, and other important towns in eastern Assam, etc., and Shillong in Meghalaya state.

Most Assamese tribals are traditionally followers of the Bhagavat religion. Many Vaishnava acharyas such as Saṅkara Deva, Madhava Deva, Damodar Deva and Hari Deva preached the Bhagavat throughout Assam. The topmost leader (satradhikari) of Saṅkara Deva's school at that time, Narayan Deva Mishra, had great faith in our worshipable Srila Gurudeva. Narayan Deva Mishra was the priest when Srila Gurudeva came to Barpeta to preach in a vast assembly at the local school and college. He was especially attracted by Srila Gurudeva's scholarship and his force of character and invited him to his home.

While in Barpeta, Srila Gurudeva stayed either at the house of Amiyakanti Das and Harekr̥ṣṇa Das, who were later initiated and given the names Aghadamana Das and Hari Das. When Srila Gurudeva went to Barpeta from Hauli in 1945, Krishnakesava Brahmachari, Gopal Krishna Dasadhikari, Trailokyanatha Vrajavasi, Madhavananda Vrajavasi and Bhunvanamohana Dasadhikari were in his party.

Another important individual who was attracted by Srila Gurudeva's personality was Jivesvara Goswami of Tihm̐u. He confessed to Srila Gurudeva that he had been disaffected with the Gaudiya Math after hearing one of its fiery householder preachers criticize another religious denomination and its doctrines. He praised Srila Gurudeva, saying that though he said basically the same things, he did it in such a way that it was pleasing and he felt none of the same disturbance that he did before. Such sweetness of expression was only possible for a transcendental personality of extraordinary character.

As a result of his tremendous preaching efforts, Srila Gurudeva was able to open three Maths in Assam -- the first in Tezpur, then Gauhati and finally in Goalpara.

No mundane efforts can diminish the glory of a true guru or devotee. For the benefit of the world's conditioned souls, Mahaprabhu took Srila Gurudeva out of a restrictive situation so that he could act freely to spread his gospel of pure devotional service everywhere. Though Srila Gurudeva left the Chaitanya Math at a fairly advanced age, he was able to organize a great preaching effort throughout India by which countless men and women were attracted to the pure devotional religion which had been practiced and taught by Sri Krishna Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. In a very short time, he was able to establish major centres throughout India. Without the divine power invested in him by the Supreme Lord, this would never have been possible for him to take on such responsibilities. Just as a wisp of cloud cannot hide the sun, no amount of envious disruptions can hold back the brilliant manifestation of a bonafide guru. Anyone who tries to do that will fall into the swamp of Vaiṣṇavapāradha.

**Calcutta**

Two distinguished residents of Calcutta, Maṇikaṇṭha Mukhopadhyaya and the president of the Homeopathic Factory, Dr. S. N. Ghosh, were influenced upon hearing Srila Gurudeva's vigorous delivery of Harikatha. They came forward in a time when Srila Gurudeva was in apparent difficulty and became his right and left-hand men, taking the responsibility for the management and improvement of all the temples which he had established. Later, Calcutta lawyer Jayanta Kumara Mukhopadhyaya was attracted by Srila Gurudeva's effulgence, character and words to take up much of the responsibility of running the Sri Chaitanya Gaudiya Math.

### **Other preaching achievements**

One of Srila Gurudeva's extraordinary achievements was to pierce the fortress of impersonalist philosophy in the Punjab and in Hyderabad. Hundreds of men and women in these places accepted the pure doctrines of Mahaprabhu's religion and Vaishnava sadacara, and took the vow of worshiping the Lord in the manner ordained by Mahaprabhu.

Atula Krishna Goswami of the Radharamaṇa temple in Vrindavan held a high opinion of Srila Gurudeva, saying that he had never seen a "gigantic spiritual personality" of equal stature.

As a result of his force of personality, Srila Gurudeva acquired the land and buildings on the birthsite of his own spiritual master, Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur, in Puri. He established centres in Sector 20-B in Chandigarh and in the Tripura capital of Agartola, where he took over the service of the Jagannath temple. He was the chief organizer of the India-wide festivities celebrating Srila Prabhupada's 100th birthday, in which all of his godbrothers took part.

It seem that no personality of any significance, whether president, state governor, judge, minister, barrister, lawyer, vice-chancellor, professor, mayor, chief commissioner, doctor, inspector general of police, wealthy citizen, Westerner or member of other religious denominations participating in interfaith conferences, was not attracted to Srila Gurudeva once he came into contact with

him. A full account of his transcendental activities and contributions can be found in his full biography, which has been published as a separate volume.

His extraordinary and exemplary character, his warmth and affectionate behavior, his outstanding tolerance and forgiveness were qualities which attracted educated and influential people, many of whom through his instigation left material life to take tridaṇḍi-sannyasa and to dedicate their lives to the service of Krishna and the devotees. It was for this reason that the Chaitanya Gaudiya Math could have such wide results in such a short time.

### **Srila Gurudeva's guru-puja lecture**

Srila Gurudeva gave the following lecture to his disciples in his evening class in the Calcutta temple at 35 Satish Mukherjee Road, on November 12, 1967. It was Utthana-ekadasi, his appearance day:

“Today, Utthana-ekadasi, is also the tithi when we worship our predecessor acharya, Srimad Gaura Kisora Das Babaji Maharaj, for it is his disappearance day. You have heard a great deal about Babaji Maharaj's transcendental activities and teachings from the venerable Puri Maharaj. As I utter his name, I beg for his blessings, and I also pray for the blessings of my Guru Maharaj, who is non-different from him. By chance, this also happens to be my own birthday. Those who love me have taken this occasion to bestow copious blessings on me. Who is such a fool that he will not accept blessings when they are given; who does not take the opportunity to advance when it arises? Therefore, I accept everyone's blessings. My every one of my senses be constantly engaged in the service of Krishna and his devotees as a result of these blessings.

“It is the custom for those in the renounced order to worship the guru on their own birthday. So this is my personal duty on this day. I have three types of gurus: (1) The word gu-ru means ‘the destroyer of ignorance’. The embodiment of unlimited knowledge is the Lord himself, whose appearance destroys all ignorance. The Lord himself is thus the root of the truth that is guru. (2) The second is he who personally attracted me and engaged me in the service of the Lord, who is himself another form of the Lord--he who founded the worldwide

Chaitanya Maths and Gaudiya Maths, my Gurudeva, Nitya-lila-praviṣṭa Prabhupada Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur. (3) Thirdly, all the Vaishnavas are my gurus. What do the Vaishnavas do? Just as it is the guru's job to constantly engage the disciple in the service of the supreme object of service, the Lord, similarly the Vaishnavas keep us engaged in the service of our worshipable Lord. It is impossible to get away with anything; if you deviate in any way, they will catch you. So, I also include my disciples amongst my gurus.

“Today my disciples performed kirtan and worshiped me as their guru. By listening to their kirtan, I worshiped them. If by listening I had any untoward motives, if I had tried to ‘pocketify’ it, then there would have been no puja. Just as kirtan is a devotional activity, so listening is also a devotional activity, sravaṇa. However we express it, they are all my masters, whom I must serve. But even though they are my masters, the objects of my service, the great affection I have for them makes me instruct them, take care of and protect them in the same way that Yashoda and Nanda punished Gopal, instructed and took care of him. When Yashoda bound little Gopal to the mortar, she did not do so because she considered him to be the ‘object of her service’, she did it because she considered him to be her child. The object of service can be both the one who protects and the one who is protected, the one who takes care and the one who is taken care of. Therefore both attitudes are found in a pure devotee.

“Srila Prabhupada called his disciples prabhu; he called even his most insignificant disciples prabhu and used the polite form of the pronoun, apni. He used the more intimate pronouns, tui and tumi, with only very few of his disciples; he was never condescending. But he would chastise and instruct even those disciples whom he addressed as prabhu, using the respectful pronoun apni. When one calls someone prabhu, or ‘master’, is it not paradoxical to then discipline him? Some might even consider it to be a kind of hypocrisy. But this is not hypocrisy on his part: when he calls his disciple ‘master’, he means it. On the other hand, when the other mood comes on him, he disciplines his disciple. In one way of looking at things, the spiritual master is disciplinarian, in another, he is the disciple's dearest friend and well-wisher.

“I am most grateful to all those who have blessed me today. May the result of their blessings be that my every thought and instinct be directed toward the service of Krishna and his devotees. And if anyone was really worshiping me, then he should know that he has in fact worshiped my spiritual master, who is the real object of worship. Service to the guru is service to God. I never saw

anything in my guru other than the desire to achieve the pleasure of the Lord. He never for a moment thought that anything other than devotion to Krishna was in the true interest of the conditioned souls. Had he thought thus, he would not have been able to keep someone like me in the maṭh.

vaco-vegām manasaḥ krodha-vegām

jihva-vegām udaropastha-vegām |

etan vegan yo viśaheta dhiraḥ

sarvam apimāṁ pṛthiviṁ sa siṣyat ||

A sober person who can tolerate the urges of speech, the mind and anger, as well as the urges to taste nice food, to fill the belly and to satisfy the genitals, is qualified to become master of the entire world. (Upadesaṁṛta, 1)

“Those who have controlled the six urges are qualified to discipline others. Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur considered the above instruction to be directed towards householders and not to renunciates, but in fact, unless one has already been able to control the six urges, he is not qualified to leave the householder asrama. Why then did Srila Prabhupada make me a tyagi, when I have not been able to master the six urges? Perhaps I can make a mistake, but he certainly could not have made one. As my well-wisher, as my protector and master, why did he keep me in the maṭh? The reason is that he knew with certainty that there is no other way for anyone to achieve the ultimate good without associating with Vaishnavas and engaging in the service of the Supreme Lord.

“Through association with the devotees, by hearing the scriptures, one is able to experience the greatness of the Lord. This gives him the impetus to serve the Lord. There is no guarantee that simply by superficially controlling the senses one will become a devotee. There are many eunuchs in the world who would have become devotees if that were the case. Such sense control or renunciation has no standing unless there is love for the guru, Krishna and Radha. Without love for Krishna, without service to my Lord, then all this renunciation is not worth a plugged nickel, it is false renunciation.



“A renunciate or celibate who has no interest in service to the Lord is nowhere near as dear to us as someone who has dedicated himself to the Lord’s service who is by far superior. This is because even though at first he may be somewhat erratic in controlling his senses, through the higher taste his senses will ultimately be completely mastered and he will have no interest in anything but Krishna. Nothing else will enchant him.

viṣaya vinivartante niraharasya dehinaḥ |

rasa-varjaṁ raso’py asya paraṁ dṛṣṭva nivartante ||

Although a person of gross corporeal consciousness may avoid sense objects by external renunciation, his eagerness for sense enjoyment remains within. However, inner attachment to sense objects is spontaneously denounced by the person of properly adjusted intelligence, due to his having had a glimpse of the all-attractive beauty of the Supreme Truth. (Bhagavad-gita, 2.59)

“One may fast, but does that stop one from desiring food? Even if one stops sense activities, the tendency to engage in such activities is not stopped. When one experiences a higher taste, however, one loses one’s interest in the lower taste. When one has the experience of the joys of love for Krishna, then the inferior pleasures of the world cease to hold any charm. This is called yukta-vairagya. This is why Narada instructed Yudhiṣṭhira: tasmāt kenapy upayena manaḥ kṛṣṇe nivesayet: ‘O Maharaj Yudhiṣṭhira! Engage your mind in Krishna by any means possible.’ (SB 7.1.32)

“I may be renounced, but my mind is still accepting and rejecting thoughts and desires constantly. So, I am associating with my mind, not with Krishna. What benefit can come of that? It is of no benefit to me to associate with someone who simply praises and flatters me. It is far more beneficial to find the company of someone who will discipline me, who will instruct me and show me my mistakes.

“Devotion to Krishna has no relation to worldly learning or ignorance. If it did, then scholars and paṇḍitas would all be devotees. Whoever has realized that the ultimate goal of life is Krishna’s pleasure alone does not need to waste his

time in studies. I remember an event which took place when I was at the Madras Gaudiya Math, where I spent about ten years of my life. Through the efforts of some godbrothers and myself we were able to build the Madras temple. Ramachandra Aiyar, the son of the man who had donated the land for the temple, Sadashiva Aiyar, advised us to learn Tamil so that we could preach to the general populace of the city. He even took steps to help us learn. I had been studying Tamil for only three days when a telegram came telling me to go to Puri. When I saw Prabhupada, I told him that it would take about six months to learn Tamil. Srila Prabhupada said, ‘Krishna-bhakti is not transmitted by language. Through it, you may be able to transmit learning or scholarship, but that is all. Love for Krishna is communicated by one who possesses love for Krishna. Preach in whatever languages you already know. I don’t advise you to lose your valuable time learning other languages.’

“The Math is there for culturing one’s inherent love for Krishna. Through such culture, one feels happiness and he communicates that happiness to others. One who loves Krishna loves every single living being. Devotion to the Lord is awakened by associating with saintly devotees: saṅgena sadhu-bhaktanam isvararadhanena ca, (SB 7.7.30)

“I may be incapable, but my worshipable Lord is not. If any of you engage me in the service of Krishna and his devotees, then my worshipable Lords, Srila Prabhupada, Mahaprabhu and Radha-Krishna, will surely give you their combined blessings. May all of you be successful, may Srila Prabhupada be pleased with you all.”

## **Registration of the Chaitanya Gaudiya Math**

In order to assure the proper management of the Sri Chaitanya Gaudiya Math, Srila Gurudeva had the society officially registered according to the Registration of Societies, West Bengal Act xxvi of 1961. This was done on August 9, 1976. Not long thereafter, he wrote the following letter:

“To the helpers and workers of the Sri Chaitanya Gaudiya Math, as well as to all my disciples:

“My physical condition is worsening, and I do not know where I will be when I leave my body. If I should die somewhere, then I make the following submission to my disciples, whether renounced or householder, as well as to my affectionate godbrothers, that I have registered all of my maths and temples according to the Society Registration Act. The society has twelve trustees. None of these trustees can be changed unless it is proved that they have committed a serious fault contrary to the principles of pure devotion or some act which is against the interests of the Math and its preaching activities. If one of the trustees leaves of his own will, then someone else must be chosen to replace him according to the rules. I have chosen Tridaṇḍi Svami Bhakti-vallabha Tirtha Maharaj to be president and acharya of the Sri Chaitanya Gaudiya Math after my departure. I will be happy if everyone works toward the maintenance of the institution, preaching pure devotion and maintaining its principles under his leadership.

The humble petitioner,

Tridaṇḍi-bhikṣu Sri Bhakti-dayita Madhava,

Dec. 12, 1976.”

### **Srila Gurudeva’s last instructions**

The following lecture was delivered at the Calcutta Sri Chaitanya Gaudiya Math on the morning of Saturday, Dec. 30, 1978. Tridaṇḍi Svami Bhakti-vallabha Tirtha Maharaj told Srila Gurudeva that an inexperienced Western devotee had come to Calcutta from Chandigarh in order to receive personal instructions from Srila Gurudeva himself. The devotee had been there for several days, but since the doctor had forbidden Gurudeva to talk excessively, he had had no opportunity to hear him speak. It would be nice if Gurudeva could say something to him. Our most worshipable Srila Guru Maharaj then started to speak, directing his words to the Western devotee who had taken shelter of him.

## Exclusive devotion to Krishna

“I am not well and the doctor has warned me not to speak too much. It is quite possible that I do not stay much longer in this world. I am telling you that to engage in a proper practice of devotional service, you must be fixed in the worship of your desired form of the Lord. When a woman is not faithful to her husband, when she loves someone else, she cannot give herself to his service. Infidelity and exclusive devotion cannot go together. For this reason, a faithful and devoted wife will never allow anyone to take the place of her husband, nor will she criticize anyone else. She will not condemn her brother-in-law, her mother-in-law or her father-in-law, nor anyone else who is related to her husband, but will rather give each of them his or her due respect. In the same way, if you wish to advance in devotional service, worship Krishna alone. Do not criticize the other gods and goddesses, but think of them as servants of Krishna and give them their due respect in that consciousness. But be careful to never give them the place which is due to the ultimate object of your devotion. I am giving you this instruction. Take responsibility for it. Give this matter a little thought. You are a competent person, you are highly qualified, but you don’t understand this tradition yet.

“In the Gaudiya sampradaya, in the line from Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, in the religious tradition of devotion to Krishna, dedicated devotees worship Krishna exclusively. If you put other gods and goddesses on the same level as Krishna, you are making a mistake. Not all gods and goddesses are equal, nor all incarnations of Vishnu. Ete caṁsa-kalaḥ puṁsaḥ kṛṣṇas tu bhagavan svayam. After discussing all the different incarnations, Matsya, Kurma, Rama, Nrisingha, etc., Vedavyasa says that none of these incarnations is Krishna himself. Some of them are expansions, some are partial manifestations, but Krishna is the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

jṁar bhagavatta haite anyer abhagavatta |

svayam bhagavan sabder tahatei satta ||

The epithet svayam bhagavan can only be used for him from whom the characteristics of Godhead are derived. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 1.2.88)

“No one is equal to Krishna. Everyone should keep this in mind and worship Krishna exclusively and with dedication. Devotion will not increase by making a great sound and fury. Everyone should remember this. We will not condemn any other gods or goddesses, but will pray them to give us the blessing that we remain fixed on our supreme object of worship, Krishna.

### **Instructions for the Math after his departure**

“I have registered the Math. The Math is no one’s personal property. But that doesn’t mean that I am going to leave this place a mess, with everyone in charge. If I do that, my life’s efforts will all have been wasted. I have therefore devised a management scheme, which is necessary for the proper running of the Math after I am gone. One person will be named Acharya; he will be the head man or president.

“When I am gone, one person will take my place. Who will that be? My spiritual master did not like the idea that there should be a vote to decide the matter. To elect an acharya is not in accordance with the principles of Hari-bhakti. God himself will decide who is the acharya. The acharya is the person who is most dear to him. Who will make that decision? The proper arrangement is when the Lord himself says, ‘This person is the one who is most dear to me.’ Therefore the rule of the disciplic succession is that the choice should come from above. The correct process is that the order should be given from higher up. From the worldly point of view, everyone can get together to elect a leader, but the correct process is that the Lord himself indicates which devotee is filled with love for him, and he makes him the acharya. This is the process approved by scripture.

“When Srila Prabhupada was ill, he asked the solicitor, Mr. J. N. Basu, to write up a constitution. We heard that the constitution could be made according to one of two methods, by nomination or by election. Finally, the constitution was written according to the latter method. But Srila Prabhupada did not like it

and he rejected it. I and two or three others were personally present when it happened. You cannot decide who is a sadhu, an acharya or realized soul by taking a vote on the matter. Someone will say one thing, another something else and the debate will simply go on. Therefore the proper method is that the Lord himself choose which person will be honored with the position of acharya. The scripture enjoins us to respect this process.

“This process is not followed only in the Gaudiya sampradaya; it can be seen in every Vaishnava sampradaya, the Ramanuja, the Madhva, the Nimbarka and the Vishnusvami. This is the way that the disciplic succession is maintained. Therefore, the process ordained in the disciplic succession must be followed. I have therefore discussed with my senior godbrothers who are a part of the Gaudiya Math brotherhood, and I have decided to make Sriman Bhakti-vallabha Tirtha the next president in my absence....

“When I have gone, that does not give you all an excuse to behave just as you please. The defining characteristic of a Vaishnava is following a devotee. The Lord’s blessings follow the blessings of the devotee. When a devotee is merciful to someone, the Lord’s mercy follows. This is the essence of my instruction to you, please follow it. I have written in more detail elsewhere.

“It will not be correct if you try to throw someone out of the Math as soon as there is some discord. That will result in chaos. You first have to explain and try to clarify the situation. If that still doesn’t work, then give him money and a letter and send him to another Math. You cannot function impetuously, but should work together and follow the person who has been made leader. It is not proper to ignore his commands and to do as one pleases. One has to follow the directions of the temple commanders. All his commands are given for the service of the Lord, bear that in mind.

### **Three impediments to devotional service**

“I want to say one more thing. We have come here to engage in devotional service to Krishna. There are three principle impediments we have to watch out for.

“(1) The desire for sense gratification. The first obstacle to devotional service is kanaka, gold -- the greed to accumulate lots of money. Your attention, your attachment, should be fixed on Krishna’s lotus feet. If you become attached to anything else, you will fall down. You should not think that because outsiders will not understand, you will save money against a rainy day. Mendicants will beg, that is their dharma. Whatever money they collect they should turn over to the Math on the same day. “The temple managers should note that if any temple devotee falls ill, they should arrange for treatment. If necessary, they should borrow money, but arrange for treatment. I can remember a time when we didn’t even have money in the Math for buying groceries. Then I borrowed money from someone without telling anyone and went and bought food from the market. No one other than Uddharan Prabhu knew about it. Uddharan Prabhu would go to a householder’s place and borrow money from him. The householder was Govinda Babu. If he didn’t have any money, he would borrow from his wife. Later I paid all the money back. How many people know about that?

“Sripad Goswami Maharaj, Sripad Nemi Maharaj, and I did all the collecting. I would put on a waistcoat and would go out to collect. Then I would come back and give all the money to the temple. Srimad Bhaktipradipa Tirtha Maharaj, Yayabara Maharaj and Sridhara Maharaj would accompany me. Whenever they needed something I would buy it, but I never spent the temple collection money for myself. At the Calcutta Math, I would say to Kunja Da, “Is there any cloth in the Math? If there is, let me have one.” But I would never ask for anything that I did not need, just for pleasure. None of you should set aside money that was collected for the temple, that will cause a disruption in your devotional life. It doesn’t matter for the Math if you decide to set aside something for yourself, Kṛṣṇa will take care of the Math and the devotees. But if you try to build up a savings account with money collected for the Math, your spiritual life will go to hell and you won’t be able to last in devotional service. Don’t set aside money for yourself, give everything to the temple manager. If there is any problem, tell the temple manager. The desire for money is an obstacle to devotional service.

“(2) Another obstacle is association with women. Both direct association and subtle association cause problems. It goes without saying that you don’t engage in gross sexual activity, but you shouldn’t even think about it. Because we have given up everything to come here and engage in the service of the Lord.

“(3) The third obstacle is the desire for personal aggrandizement. Srila Prabhupada wrote:

kanaka kamini pratiṣṭha baghini  
chāriyache jare sei to vaiṣṇava |  
sei anasakta, sei suddha bhakta,  
saṁsara tathaya pay parabhava ||

Someone who has given up the tigresses of gold, women, and fame, is a true Vaishnava. He is unattached and a pure devotee. The illusory power of the material world has been defeated by him.

Prabhupada has compared the desires for wealth, women and fame with a tigress. The desire for fame and good reputation are very strong and problematic. But even someone who does not seek fame, when he engages in true service to the Lord, finds that fame comes to him of its own accord. People naturally give him their respect. People will always give respect to a true devotee.

pratiṣṭhara bhaye puri gela palana |  
kṛṣṇa-preme pratiṣṭha cale saṅge gaṇana ||

Madhavendra Puri ran away, afraid of being distracted by fame. But when one has love for Krishna, fame flows alongside him. (Chaitanya Charitamrita 2.4.147)

“So, you avoid these three obstacles. It is not an easy thing to do. They draw the mind. Money, women and fame. These are what the conditioned soul lives for. They exist to some extent in the mind of the practitioner, they are anarthas, but



we should not tolerate their presence or approve of them in ourselves.

“Tirtha Maharaj cannot always stay here. So Jagamohana Prabhu has to run the Math. Don’t be offended if I am rough with you. Forgive me. I only wish to serve the Vaishnavas. I want to serve all of you.

“Worship the Lord with unflinching dedication. Don’t stop worshiping him, no matter what situation you are in. This is my prayer to you, my appeal and my instruction. Chant the Holy Name in all circumstances. Worship Krishna always. Always respect the best Vaishnava, and don’t hesitate to do so. May all auspiciousness follow you all.”

vancha-kalpa-tarubhyas ca kṛpa-sindhubhya eva ca |

patitanam pavanebhyo vaiṣṇavebhyo namo namaḥ ||

I offer my respectful obeisances unto all the Vaishnava devotees of the Lord. They are just like desire trees which can bestow anything you wish for, they are oceans of compassion who purify the fallen souls.

### **Srila Gurudeva’s disappearance**

On Tuesday, February 27, 1979 (Govinda 26, 492, Caitanyabda; Phalgun 14, 1386, Bengali year), at 9 A.M., in the midst of the singing of the Holy Names, Srila Gurudeva entered the eternal pastimes of the Lord, at the time of his morning lila with Radha, leaving his godbrothers and disciples in an ocean of grief. It was also the disappearance day of Jagannath Das Babaji and Rasikananda Deva Goswami. He was in his own room at the Calcutta Math, situated at 35 Satish Mukherjee Road. At four o’clock in the afternoon on the same day, the devotees left Calcutta with his body in the accompaniment of the singing of the Holy Names and came to Mayapur, where he was placed in

samadhi according to the scriptural directions. The officiating priest at his funeral was H. H. Bhakt-pramoda Puri Maharaj, and on March 1, 1979, a festival of mourning was held in his honor at the headquarters of the Chaitanya Gaudiya Math at Ishodyan in Mayapur.

On Thursday, March 22, 1979, a memorial assembly was held in the sankirtan hall at the Calcutta Math on Satish Mukherjee Road, under the direction of H. H. Parivrajakacarya Tridaṇḍi Svami Bhakti-hṛdaya Vana Maharaj. The guest of honor was the publisher of the Amrita Bazar Patrika, Tushar Kanti Ghosh. Many of Srila Gurudeva's godbrothers and leading citizens of Calcutta were present at the assembly.

### **A list of maṭhs and institutions established by Srila Gurudeva**

Here is a list of the many maṭhs, schools, libraries, free clinics, and printing presses -- the great drums of the modern sankirtan movement. This list is given in chronological order.

#### **Mathas**

- (1) 1942. Shyamananda Gaudiya Math, Midnapore (W.B.) This temple was established by Srila Gurudeva with the help of his two godbrothers, H. H. Bhaktivicara Yayabara Maharaj and H. H. Bhakti-kumuda Santa Maharaj.
- (2) 1948. Sri Gaudiya Math, Tezpur (Assam).
- (3) 1953. Sri Chaitanya Gaudiya Math. Paltan Bazar, Gauhati-8 (Assam).
- (4) 1955. Sri Chaitanya Gaudiya Math. 86A Ras Bihari Avenue, Calcutta-26.1

- (5) 1956. Sri Chaitanya Gaudiya Math. Ishodyan, Sri Mayapur, Nadiya (W.B.).
- (6) 1956. Sri Chaitanya Gaudiya Math. Sarvesvara Haveli, Vrindaban (U.P.)
- (7) 1960. Sri Chaitanya Gaudiya Math. Goari Bazar, Krishnanagar, Nadia (W.B.)
- (8) 1960. Sri Chaitanya Gaudiya Math. Mathura Road, Vrindaban (U.P.).
- (9) 1961. Sri Chaitanya Gaudiya Math. 35 Satish Mukherjee Road, Calcutta-26. The new temple was opened in 1967.
- (10) 1961. Sri Gaudiya Sevasrama. Madhuvana Mahauli, Mathura (U.P.)
- (11) 1962. Sri Chaitanya Gaudiya Math. Urdu Gully, Patharghati, Hyderabad (A.P.).
- (12) 1962. Srila Jagadisa Pandit's Sripaṭa. Jasaṛa, Nadia (W.B.).
- (13) 1967. Sri Vinoda Vaṇi Gaudiya Math. 32, Kaliya Daha, Vrindaban (U.P.).

- (14) 1969. Sri Chaitanya Gaudiya Math. Goalpara (Assam).
- (15) 1970. Sri Chaitanya Gaudiya Math. Sector 20A, Chandigarh.
- (16) 1972. Sri Chaitanya Gaudiya Math. Divan Deori, Hyderabad (A.P.)
- (17) 1974. Sri Chaitanya Gaudiya Math. Grand Road, Puri (Orissa).
- (18) 1975. Sri Chaitanya Gaudiya Math. Gokula Mahaban, Mathura (U.P.).
- (19) 1976. Sri Chaitanya Gaudiya Math. Sri Jagannath Mandira, Agartala (Tripura).
- (20) 1977. Sri Chaitanya Gaudiya Math. 187, D.L. Road, Dehradun (U.P.).

## **Schools**

- (1) 1946. Sri Chaitanya Sarasvata Catuspathi. Shyamananda Gaudiya Math, Midnapore.
- (2) 1959. Sri Siddhanta Saraswati Prathamika Vidyalaya. Ishodyan, Sri Mayapur (Nadia).

- (3) 1959. Sri Gaudiya Saṁskṛta Vidyapiṭha. Ishodyan, Sri Mayapur (Nadia).
- (4) 1961. Sri Chaitanya Gaudiya Vidyamandira. (Primary and secondary). 86A Ras Bihari Avenue, Calcutta-26.
- (5) 1967. Sri Chaitanya Gaudiya Pascatya Bhaṣa Sikṣalaya (western languages school). 86A Ras Bihari Avenue, Calcutta-26.
- (6) 1968. Sri Chaitanya Gaudiya Saṁskṛta Mahavidyalaya. 86A Ras Bihari Avenue, Calcutta-26.
- (7) 1972. Sri Chaitanya Gaudiya Saṁskṛta Vidyalaya Sector 20-B, Chandigarh.
- (8) 1972. Sri Chaitanya Gaudiya Antaḥpradesika Bhaṣa Sikṣalaya (Indian languages school). Sector 20-B, Chandigarh.

## **Libraries**

- (1) 1970. Sri Chaitanya Gaudiya Math Granthagara (for comparative religious studies). 86A Ras Bihari Avenue, Calcutta-26.
- (2) 1972. Sri Chaitanya Gaudiya Math Granthagara. Sector 20-B, Chandigarh.

## **Free Clinics**

- (1) 1959. Sri Chaitanya Gaudiya Math Datavya Cikitsalaya. Ishodyan, Sri Mayapur, Nadia.
- (2) 1972. Sri Chaitanya Gaudiya Math Datavya Cikitsalaya. Sector 20-B, Chandigarh.
- (3) 1978. Sri Chaitanya Gaudiya Math Datavya Cikitsalaya. Grand Road, Puri (Orissa).

## **Printing Press**

- (1) 1964. Sri Chaitanya Vaṇi Press. 26/1, Prince Golam Mohammad Road, Tollygunge, Calcutta-33. Was moved in 1966 to 34/1A, Mahim Haldar Street, Calcutta-26.

## **Monthly magazine**

- (1) 1961. Sri Chaitanya Vaṇi Patrika. 35, Satish Mukherjee Road, Calcutta-26.

Other temples under Srila Gurudeva's management

- (1) 1955. Sarbhog Gaudiya Math. Cakcaka Bajar, Barpeta district (Assam).

(2) 1955. Sri Gadai Gauranga Math. P.O. Baliyati (Dhaka, Bangla Desh).

## **Srila A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada**

His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada was a rasika-acharya, an expert in relishing the mellows of pure devotion as taught by Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. Such a capacity to relish hearing and chanting of the Godhead's transcendental name, form, attributes, and pastimes is uncommon. The great Srimad Bhagavatam (6.14.5) informs us:

muktanam api siddhanam

narayana-parayanam

sudurlabham prasatatma

koṭiṣv api maha-mune

“Out of thousands of perfected souls, it is very rare to find one that is a pure devotee of God.”

Perfection, or self-realization, is indeed a noteworthy accomplishment, yet it pales in comparison to unalloyed devotion. One need not fully surrender to God to achieve liberation from the flawed existence of material life. Any number of techniques may be employed in this attempt, but absolute humility of heart is not a requirement. Pure devotion, on the other hand, acknowledges no technique,

while humility and absolute surrender are the stage on which the drama of divine love is eternally performed. His Divine Grace had such humility, such surrender, although he was at the same time often very demanding, insisting on a high standard from his disciples. His assertiveness was all on behalf of Godhead and therefore justified. It was an example of the dynamic face of humility, not an abstract, sterile humility, but the concrete and productive humility of doing God's bidding.

Srila Prabhupada came to America in 1965 “as an aggressor.” Aggression against illusion is the highest service to humanity. The cost of this war is absolute humility, for souls in this world are often less than thankful, unaware as they are of their own self-interest. The reward, however, is great. It is the dignity of the soul. This was the work of His Divine Grace: to bring dignity to all souls, and he did so with all of the humility at his command. It has been said that what Mohammed did with the sword, what Christianity did with wealth, he did with a humble heart—inundating the entire planet with love of God. The day will come when all men, women, and children from all races, countries, and creeds sing his praise.

For twelve years, beginning in 1965 until he disappeared from mortal vision in 1977, His Divine Grace circled the globe transplanting what was thought by many to be an Indian religion onto foreign soil. He demonstrated practically that Gaudiya Vaishnavism is not a product of a particular culture, but the dharma of the soul. He took the living conception of what he called Krishna consciousness and extended its life beyond what the greatest Gaudiya thinkers and practitioners of the time imagined even remotely possible. Deep realization lies within the ability to adapt the spiritual reality to diverse material circumstances, making it accessible to one and all. This is the work of an acharya, who teaches both by precept and example. The acharya is not frozen in time. He is melted in love of Godhead, and flows without restriction to anyone and everyone who shows even the slightest interest in pure devotion. This was the work of His Divine Grace. He left a legacy of love, not law, for any and all of his immediate followers to embrace and continue. He gave to all, and looked for one—one who could actually understand his message.

Who was His Divine Grace? Founder Acharya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, father, friend, and saktyavesa avatar (empowered incarnation of a particular potency of God), nityanandavesa, the empowerment of Sripad Nityananda Prabhu. The Lord Himself in His most merciful



disposition, can only describe what we could see of him with the outer eye attuned to the spiritual mind. The inner truth of Srila Prabhupada's eternal form and personality will forever remain concealed to those who fail to embrace not merely the form, but the substance of all that he taught and all that he exemplified. The darshan (spiritual revelation) of his inner identity is his prerogative. May His Divine Grace mercifully bestow that most precious vision upon all who follow him with steadfast intelligence.

## **Srila Bhakti Raksaka Sridhara Deva Goswami Maharaja**

Srila Bhakti Rakshaka Sridhar Deva Goswami Maharaj was born in Hapaniya, West Bengal, in 1895. The pastimes of his youth were spent in learning and he naturally excelled in every subject that he took up. From his childhood, his tendency was towards the culture of faith in God and the study of the Vedas, Upanishads, and other scriptures. He received the sacred thread according to his family tradition when fourteen years old, and his affinity for the divine world kept on increasing. In his early years he was especially attracted to Lord Ramachandra, but later, when he came in contact with the doctrine of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, he began to read Bhagavad Gita and developed an attraction for Lord Krishna.

After completing his primary and secondary education, Srila Sridhar Maharaj entered Krishnanath College in Berhampore (District Murshidabad), Bengal. After four years of study, he graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree in philosophy. For some time Srila Sridhar Maharaj was searching for a sadhu from whom he could take initiation, but could not find anyone to his liking. Then, by the grace of the Almighty, Srila Sridhar Maharaj met his eternal guide and preceptor Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur, and in 1927 became his initiated disciple.

In 1930 Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur awarded Srila Sridhar Maharaj sannyas and bestowed upon him the name Bhakti Rakshaka, meaning "guardian of devotion." Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur saw in Srila Sridhar Maharaj

the ability to perfectly protect the Gaudiya Vaishnava line from misrepresentation and misconception. After reading Srila Sridhar Maharaj's Sanskrit compositions glorifying Bhaktivinoda Thakur, Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur remarked, "Now I am satisfied that, after I leave, there will be at least one man who can represent my conclusions (bhakti-siddhanta)."

Srila Sridhar Maharaj was recognized for his vast understanding and realization of the shastra and thus his guru also awarded him the title sastra-nipuṇa, meaning one who is very expert or intelligent in understanding the meaning of shastra. Not only was Srila Sridhar Maharaj recognized by his guru for his advancement in Krishna consciousness, but he was also recognized by many of his affectionate godbrothers for his seniority. Many of them, such as Srila A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, Srila Bhakti Prajnana Kesava Maharaj, Srila Bhakti Saranga Goswami Maharaj, Srila Bhakti Dayita Madhava Maharaj, Srila Bhakti Promode Puri Goswami Maharaj and many others, considered him to be their siksha guru.

Once in a letter Srila A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaj commented as follows: "What Sripad Sridhar Maharaj has directed, I take it on my head. He is my ever well-wisher. After the departure of Prabhupada (Saraswati Thakur) it is appropriate that I should accept his direction. I got direction from him that I shall live in this country forever."

Sometime after the passing away of Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur in 1936, Srila Sridhar Maharaj established his own temple, Sri Chaitanya Saraswata Math, on the banks of the sacred Ganges in Nabadwip Dham, the holy land of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. Having deeply assimilated the teachings of Sri Chaitanya, Srila Sridhar Maharaj began composing original texts. His first work, Sri-sri-prapanna-jivanamṛta, was a comprehensive scriptural study of saraṇagati (surrender). Srila Sridhar Maharaj composed numerous songs, prayers, and commentaries in Bengali and Sanskrit. Among these important works are his commentaries on Bhaktivinoda Thakur's Saraṇagati, Bengali translations of Bhagavad Gita and Bhakti-rasamṛta-sindhu, and his own original Sanskrit poem summarizing Chaitanya lila, Prema-dhama-deva-stotram. An outstanding contribution to the Rupanuga Gaudiya Sampradaya is Srila Sridhar Maharaj's commentary on Gayatri mantra, Gayatri-nigudhartha, following the siddhanta of Srimad Bhagavatam.

The senior members of the Gaudiya Vaishnava community deeply

appreciated all the literary works of Srila Sridhar Maharaj. The well-known, if not famous, disciple of Saraswati Thakur, Srila Akinchana Das Babaji Maharaj, used to say, “I find the writings of Sripad Sridhar Maharaj to be not different from those of Narottama Das Thakur.”

Many enlightened souls have proclaimed the greatness of the Gayatri-nigudhartha as the supreme wealth of the Gaudiya Vaishnavas. Srila Bhakti Promode Puri Goswami Maharaj wrote: “Sridhar Maharaj’s explanation of Brahma-gayatri, the mother of all the Vedas, indicating how it is centred on the meditation of Srimati Radharani, was revealed to him in the depth of his realization. It is the result of Paramaradhya Sri Srila Prabhupada (Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur)’s divine grace on him. This explanation is deeply appreciated by those fortunate, intelligent devotees who are aware of the relishable beauty of pure devotional service.

“Parama-pujyapada Sridhar Deva has presented the world with this most beautiful, full-fledged explanation of Gayatri, the mother of Sruti, after realizing the deepest meaning of Srīmad Bhagavatam. He has shown us the treasure of the most beautiful opulent wealth of the supreme reality: that the loving adoration of vareṇya bhargo, who is the supreme loving worshiper, ecstasy giver and internal potency of the supremely worshipable Sri Lila Purushottam Deva, is the best way to attain the grace of Sri Krishna. Gayatri is the benevolent source of pure devotional inspiration and intelligence required to attain the grace of Sri Krishna, the Divine Lord of this universe, and is the exclusive meaning of the expression savalac chyamalaṁ prapadye (Upanishads).”

In the Gayatri-nigudhartha Srila Sridhar Maharaj has written:

bhv-ades tat-savitur-vareṇya-vihitaṁ kṣetra-jna-sevy-arthakam

bhargo vai vṛṣabhanu-jatma-vibhavaikaradhana-sri-puram

bhargo jyotir acintya-lilana-sudhaikaradhana-sri-puram

bhargo dhama taraṅga-khelana-sudhaikaradhana-sri-puram

bhargo dhama sada nirasta-kuhakam prajnana-lila-puram  
devasyamṛta-rupa-lila-rasadhera radha-dhiḥ-preṣiṇaḥ  
devasyamṛta-rupa-lila-puruṣasya radha-dhiḥ-preṣiṇaḥ  
devasya dyuti-sundaraika-puruṣasyaradhya-dhiḥ-preṣiṇaḥ  
gayatri-muraliṣṭa-kirtana-dhanam radha-padam dhimahi  
gayatri-gaditam mahaprabhu-matam radha-padam dhimahi  
dhir aradhanam eva nanyad iti tad radha-padam dhimahi

“With all of your thoughts and heart’s desire, fully engage yourself in the pure devotional service and worship of bharga, the supreme goddess Srimati Radharani, who is the unlimited origin and possessor of the svarupa-sakti of Krishna, the Supreme Beautiful Godhead (deva). Being the ultimate and all-harmonizing potency of Krishna, She remains His eternally unexcelled beloved servitor. In order to fully enrich and promote His lila-vilasa, She manifests Herself in variegated congenial forms. It is She who manifests Herself as dhama (Goloka) the abode of Krishna, in the form of beautiful effulgence (saundarya-jyotiḥ) and opulence (vaibhava), adorning and glorifying Him all around. It is She who extends Herself as lila-sakti (the potency principle which promotes the bliss giving pastimes of Sri Krishna in variegated colorful, tasteful, mystically opulent and beautiful ways). She is the unlimited ocean of Love of Krishna personified (mahabhava-svarupiṇi). Therefore adore Her as the supreme goal of life, who gives venerable, blessed intelligence, realization and taste of enhanced loving worship towards Her and Her eternal beloved deva, Sri Krishna, the all fulfillment of life.

“The sound of Gayatri is none other than the divine flute song of Krishna. This flute song is naturally filled with Radha-prema and dedicated to serve pleasure unto Her. What is the special characteristic of this all-attractive flute song in the life of devotional aspirants? It deeply attracts all souls to the unending beauty, glories and qualities of His eternal beloved Srimati Radharani, and situates them correctly in their own respective positions in Her eternal ecstatic service. Krishna’s flute song thus deeply inspires the devotees to

embrace an artist-servitor in the divine service-concert of His eternal consort Srimati Radharani through harmonious service performance. The innermost meaning of this flute song for all devotees is radha-padam dhimahi, which means to wholeheartedly embrace and engage yourself in the service of the lotus feet of Srimati Radharani with all devotional love. The highest and innermost instruction of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu is radha-padam dhimahi.”

Krishna is deva, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who reveals His pastimes of love in the eternal Goloka Vrindavan surrounded by His devotees imbued with wonderful love of God. The honorific suffix deva was given to Srila Sridhar Maharaj’s name, as Sridhar deva Goswami, due to his ability to reveal the inner meaning of the Supreme Lord’s divine pastimes of love to the sincerely aspiring devotee. The way that Srila Sridhar Maharaj spoke of the Supreme Lord’s pastimes was absolutely wonderful. His voice and every movement were filled with divine love for Godhead. He was, as one disciple exclaimed, “beauty, sweetness, and charm in motion.”

At an advanced age, in his fully matured stage of realization, Srila Sridhar Maharaj spoke extensively before devotees who had come from around the world to hear the teachings of Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur and the great predecessor acharyas from him. These talks were recorded on audio and videotape and transcribed. They continue to be published by Sri Chaitanya Saraswata Math and Srila Sridhara Maharaj’s many affectionate followers and admirers.

During the last days of his manifest pastimes, Srila Sridhar Maharaj remained always absorbed in deep moods of devotional separation and hankering for the divine service of Sri Sri Radha Govinda. Then in 1988, on the Amavasya, or the dark moon night, of the month of July, Srila Sridhar Maharaj withdrew his manifest presence from this earthly plane to enter the nitya lila (eternal pastimes) of the Supreme Lord.

At present the teachings of Srila Sridhar Maharaj are being spread throughout the world through the noble efforts of his many loyal and dedicated followers. Gaura Haribol!

**Srila Bhakti Promode Puri Goswami Maharaja**

In the early years of this century, Srila Prabhupada Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur set into motion a devotional revival that rapidly spread through Bengal, India, and eventually the world. He put into question the very foundations of present-day theistic thought in a way that has little comparison anywhere in the spiritual record, East or West. Through him, the world was awakened to the teachings of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and the movement of pure devotion, suddha bhakti.

In orchestrating this modern bhakti revolution, Srila Prabhupada gathered some of the greatest spiritual luminaries in contemporary history into his circle. Such a convergence of exalted spiritual personalities can only be compared to the coming together of Sri Chaitanya's direct followers in the sixteenth century. One of the devotional giants who entered Srila Prabhupada's orbit was His Divine Grace Srila Bhakti Promode Puri Goswami Maharaj.

We cannot describe the life of Srila Puri Goswami Maharaj without emphasizing his contribution to the spiritual movement in which he was so integrally involved. The depth of his accomplishments cannot be fathomed outside the context of Sri Gaudiya Math. With his fellow godbrothers, he shared an indomitable faith in the service of his Guru and the message of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. This service was the sole purpose and highest aspiration of his being. This conviction led him to spend his entire life in the pursuit of Srila Prabhupada and Mahaprabhu's pleasure and the fulfillment of their desires. If we examine his life in this setting, we will see more than just numbers, dates, places and names. We will see how he embodied the very life current that his spiritual preceptors came to give to the world.

Srila Puri Goswami Maharaj took birth in the village of Ganganandapur in Jessore district (in present-day Bangla Desh), on October 8, 1898. His parents, Tarini Charan Chakravarti and Srimati Ram Rangini Devi, named him Sri Promode Bhushan Chakravarti. During his childhood, he met his vartma-pradarsaka guru (one who opens the door to the path of devotion), Srila Bhakti Ratna Thakur, a godbrother and siksha disciple of Thakur Bhaktivinoda, the legendary architect of the present Gaudiya Vaishnava movement. Through Bhakti Ratna Thakur he was introduced to Sajjana-toṣaṇi, Bhaktivinoda Thakur's own Vaishnava periodical, which was filled with Bhaktivinoda's commentaries and holy teachings. In this way Srila Puri Maharaj became

familiar with the seminal works of the suddha bhakti tradition, such as Chaitanya Charitamrita, Chaitanya Bhagavata and the Srimad Bhagavatam. It was also through Bhakti Ratna Thakur that he first learned of his future guru, Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Prabhupada.

Srila Puri Maharaj was still a young university student when he first came before Srila Prabhupada at the Yoga Pith in Sri Mayapur in 1915. It was a significant occasion, as Srila Prabhupada's diksha guru, Paramahansa Thakur Srimad Gaura Kishor Das Babaji, had entered his eternal abode only the day before. Srila Puri Maharaj often recounted that as soon as he saw Srila Prabhupada and paid his obeisances to him for the first time, he knew in his heart that this was his spiritual master. Some years later, on the auspicious day of Sri Krishna Janmastami in 1923, he accepted both Harinam and mantra diksha from Srila Prabhupada and was given the name Pranavananda Brahmachari.

At the time, Sri Gaudiya Math was rapidly establishing itself as a bona fide manifestation of Indian religious culture and transforming the caste-conscious socio-religious world of Hinduism. Srila Prabhupada Saraswati Thakur was bringing together his intimate associates to share the wealth of Sri Krishna sankirtan. He had accepted tridandi sannyas in 1918 and by the early 1920's had already assumed a formidable position in the Bengali spiritual firmament. He was fearless when it came to upholding true religious principles. The students and practitioners of the Gaudiya Math aligned themselves with this attitude and led most exemplary lives of devotion, imbued with austerity, discipline and in-depth scriptural learning. This high standard of religious life was the hallmark of Sri Gaudiya Math and would be the thread that guided all of Srila Prabhupada's disciples, including Srimad Puri Goswami Maharaj.

The keystone of success in devotion is to perfectly hear the holy words spoken by one's spiritual preceptor. Srila Prabhupada would often say, "All that is required of you is that you lend me your ears." Srila Puri Maharaj was fully committed to this maxim. He had the great good fortune to associate closely with Srila Prabhupada for thirteen years and during that time he served him personally by recording his lectures and conversations, which were later published. The greater part of Srila Prabhupada's spoken words we are left with today come from the transcriptions of these notes. At the same time, Srila Puri Maharaj cultivated a deep knowledge of the Vaishnava scriptures, with the result that he became a veritable storehouse of the wealth of the preceptorial line coming from Sri Chaitanya and his followers. This led him to become one of the

most prolific writers and influential teachers in all of Gaudiya Vaishnava history. His writings reflect the disciplined eye of a scholar who expresses with grace and directness the purest scriptural conclusions supported by his own uncommonly profound realization.

Following Srila Prabhupada's directives, Srila Puri Maharaj edited, wrote for, published and helped distribute countless spiritual publications. He was initially inspired and directed by Srila Prabhupada to start writing and contributing articles to the Gauḍiya magazine, the backbone of the Gaudiya Math's missionary work. For seven years he served as a proofreader and as one of its primary editors. In 1926, he was charged with running the world's only daily Vaishnava newspaper, Dainika Nadiya Prakasa. He held this service for two years, publishing all of his preceptor's daily discourses along with articles by fellow students and other contemporaries. His service and learning did not pass unnoticed by Srila Prabhupada who awarded him the titles of mahamahopadesaka (great instructor) and pratna-vidyalaṅkara (keeper of the wisdom of the ancient scriptural lore).

After the disappearance of his Gurudeva in 1937, Srila Puri Maharaj continued his vocation of spreading the teachings of Sri Chaitanya through the Gauḍiya magazine, first out of the Bagh Bazaar Gaudiya Math and then later the Sri Chaitanya Math in Mayapur. After he founded the Sri Chaitanya Gaudiya Math, Srila Puri Goswami Maharaj's godbrother, Srimad Bhakti Dayita Madhava Maharaj, invited him to head the editorial board of Chaitanya Vaṇi magazine in 1964. Puri Maharaj served in this capacity for thirty-three years, furthering his life's work of preserving the teachings of his spiritual lineage. Through Chaitanya Vaṇi, he continued to make a deep impact on the devotional world.

In all, Srila Puri Maharaj's wisdom is embodied in over sixty years of writings on Vaishnava philosophy and theology. He penned a rich variety of texts, bringing the Bhagavata dharma to life through hundreds of poems, essays, narratives, diaries, editorials and personal letters, thus creating a storehouse of the wealth of pure devotion for his disciples and the world at large.

In 1942, Srila Prabhupada appeared to Srila Puri Maharaj in a dream vision and imparted to him the sannyas mantra, ordering him to accept the renounced order. After accepting tridaṇḍi sannyas from his godbrother Bhakti Gaurava Vaikhanasa Maharaj in Champahati in August of 1946, he toured parts of India



with other godbrothers such as Bhakti Hriday Bon Maharaj and Bhakti Dayita Madhava Maharaj. In the meantime, he continued to write and lecture with dedication. At the behest of his godbrother Tridandi Swami Bhakti Vilasa Tirtha Maharaj, he also served for seven years as chief pujari for the Yoga Pith temple, the birthsite of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu.

Srila Puri Maharaj took up a more solitary life of worship in the 1950's. He moved to a humble cottage on the banks of the Ganges in Ambika Kalna. The king of Burdwan was extremely impressed by his saintly ascetic character and, on the appearance day of Srimati Radharani in 1958, presented him with the ancient Ananta Vasudeva temple in Kalna.

In 1989, at the age of 91, Srila Puri Goswami Maharaj established the Sri Gopinath Gaudiya Math in Ishodyan, Sri Mayapur, for the service of their divine lordships, Sri Sri Gaura-Gadadhar, Jagannath Deva, Radha-Gopinath and Lakshmi-Narasimha Deva. In the following years, he established other temples in Jagannath Puri, Vrindavan, Calcutta and Midnapore.

Srila Puri Maharaj taught through his every action. He excelled in all aspects of devotional practice and there was perhaps no area in which he did not exhibit utmost expertise, diligence and foresight. This ranged from his encyclopedic knowledge of scripture, to maintaining the printing press, to his beautiful singing of kirtan. He was especially recognized for his sensitivity and attention to detail in the performance of deity worship and devotional rites and was thus widely called upon to be the head priest in most of the Gaudiya Math's deity installations and ceremonial functions. He was rarely known to rest; his service was an uninterrupted flow. Even in his later years, he would remain awake, writing and chanting through the night while all his youthful disciples were still asleep. When his personal servants came in the morning, they would inevitably find him awake and chanting the Holy Name, arisen before everyone else in the ashram.

Srila Bhakti Promode Puri Maharaj had outstanding love for his godbrothers and was inspired in his glorification of others. He found richness in everyone he met. He had the quality of making one feel so much wanted and their life so much valued. At the same time, he paid the least attention to himself. He was an emblem of humility and simplicity, and his generosity of spirit and kindness touched the hearts of the whole Vaishnava community. Among his lifetime, intimate companions were Srila Bhakti Rakshaka Sridhar Deva

Goswami Maharaj, Srila Bhakti Prajnana Kesava Maharaj, and Srila Akinchana Krishna Das Babaji Maharaj. Toward the end of his sojourn in this world, he was honored by the Gaudiya Vaishnava community for his learning, long life of service and devotion and made president of the World Vaishnava Association in 1995.

“He has love for his Guru; and let it be known that his life is one with his words.” This tribute, coming from Srila Prabhupada himself, is the most revealing statement about Srila Puri Goswami Maharaj’s personality and qualities. He gave credit for all of his accomplishments to the mercy of his Gurudeva alone. Through the blessings of Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur, Srila Bhakti Promode Puri Maharaj attracted the hearts of so many to the Bhagavata religion. People from so many different backgrounds and countries found in him a true spiritual guide and shelter. He upheld the principles of pure Vaishnavism and delineated the path of saraṇagati. He so embodied pure devotion and service to his spiritual master that one of his disciples once remarked that he was able to “silently lay down Srila Prabhupada’s entire siddhanta.”

We are greatly indebted to His Divine Grace for his gift—a lifetime of pure devotion, spanning over a century, which we can aspire for, learn from, and discuss about for our own spiritual nourishment. Srila Puri Maharaj departed this world for the eternal abode in the predawn hours of Narayan Chaturdasi, October 21, 1999, one day before the Rasa Purnima. His divine body was transported from Jagannath Puri to the Gopinath Gaudiya Math in Ishodyan and there placed in his eternal samadhi shrine. Prior to his departure from this world, Srila Puri Goswami Maharaj appointed his intimate disciple, Sripada Bhakti Bibudha Bodhayan Maharaj as his successor and president-acharya of Sri Gopinath Gaudiya Math.

In years to come as more of his words and vision are translated, the world outside of Bengal and India will come to know the spirit of the true Vaishnava religion that he tirelessly shared. May the gentle rain of nectar of his perfect teachings continue to bring auspiciousness into this world.

## **Srila Bhakti Vallabha Tirtha Maharaja**

His Holiness Srila Bhakti Ballabh Tirtha Maharaj was born in 1924 in Assam, India, on Rama-navami, the most auspicious appearance day of Lord Ramachandra. Having been brought up in a pious environment, he developed a strong inclination to search for truth, which led him to take up the study of philosophy at Calcutta University.

After completing his MA in philosophy in 1947, he came in contact with his spiritual master, Srila Bhakti Dayita Madhava Goswami Maharaj, and immediately became attracted by his divine and powerful personality. Srila Madhava Maharaj was one of the foremost followers of the illustrious preceptor of the pure devotional school of bhakti yoga, Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Goswami Thakur. From that time onward, Srila Tirtha Maharaj completely dedicated his life to the service of his guru. Soon he became secretary of the devotional institution Sri Caitanya Gaudiya Math, which has over twenty ashrams in India alone. As one of Madhava Maharaj's first sannyas disciples, he took the vow of renunciation in 1961.

After the disappearance of Srila Madhava Goswami Maharaj in 1979, Srila Tirtha Maharaj was appointed his successor as acharya of the Math. During his lifetime, he received the blessings and intimate association of many of Srila Bhaktisiddhanta's prominent followers, such as Srila Bhakti Promode Puri Maharaj, Srila Bhakti Hriday Bon Maharaj, Srila Bhakti Rakshaka Sridhar Maharaj, Akinchana Krishna Das Babaji Maharaj and many others.

For the last five decades, Srila Bhakti Ballabh Tirtha Goswami Maharaj has been engaged in preaching the philosophy of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu to counter the modern trend toward violence and cruelty, and to bring about unity of hearts among all, irrespective of race, creed or religion. Srila A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaj had requested Srila Tirtha Maharaj to accompany him to the USA just prior to his launching of the Krishna consciousness movement in the west in 1965. As he was engaged in the service of his gurudeva as secretary of Sri Caitanya Gaudiya Math at that time, Srila Tirtha Maharaj humbly declined. Since 1997, however, at the request of Srila Bhakti Promode Puri Maharaj, he has been traveling the globe several months a year, enlivening all who come in contact with his humble, sweet personality, extraordinary kirtan

and message of divine love. To date, his preaching travels outside India have taken him around the world, including the UK, Holland, France, Spain, Italy, Austria, Germany, Slovenia, Russia, the Ukraine, Australia, Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Hawaii and throughout the continental US. Everyone is attracted by his eloquent, insightful and, most of all, purely devotional discourses.

During his US tour in 1997 His Holiness Srila Tirtha Maharaj addressed the United Nations' "World Peace Prayer Society," and "World Conference on Religion and Peace" in New York City, offering them a succinct outline for world peace based upon the spiritual tenets of the ancient Vedas. His preaching programs over the past years have also included many interesting dialogues with prominent Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, Hindu and Baha'i theologians, in such diverse settings as universities, interfaith groups, churches, Hindu temples and a wide variety of metaphysical and private educational centers. All are invariably won over by his gentle and affectionate nature, combined with his resolute faith in Guru, Vaishnava and Bhagavan. He has also spoken on the sublime teachings of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu on many radio and television programs, including a thought provoking interview on BBC radio in 2000, which was broadcast worldwide.

In addition to his role as acharya of Sri Caitanya Gaudiya Math, Srila Bhakti Ballabh Tirtha Maharaj serves as the acharya of GOKUL (Global Organization of Krishnachaitanya's Universal Love), which he founded in 1997. He has also served as vice-president of the World Vaishnava Association (WVA). Working eighteen hours a day, he is incessantly engaged in the service of humanity as a teacher of Vedic wisdom and the philosophy of bhakti yoga. He is presently engaged in writing articles and books in his native languages as well as in English. To date, his English publications include the books *Suddha Bhakti*, *Sages of Ancient India*, *A Taste of Transcendence* and *Sri Chaitanya: His Life and Associates*.